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A NOVEL of MARRIAGE

MARY
GRACE
ASHTON

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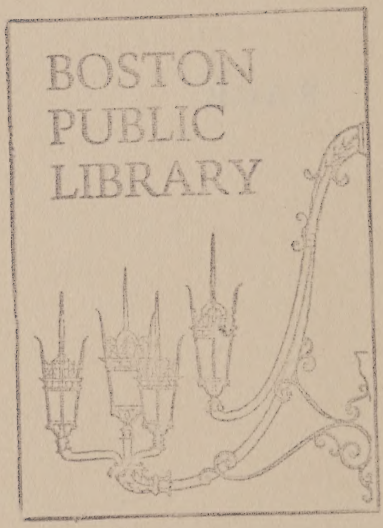
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RACE

A Novel of Marriage

BY

MARY GRACE ASHTON

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TO

MOTHER AND LOLA

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RACE

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CHAPTER I

"ISRAEL OF THE LORD BELOV'D"

IT was quite early when Ivan let himself into the house in Berkeley Square, and stood in the hall for a moment in a little pause over the letters. Solomon Schenstein, Esq., seven for his father. Mrs. Solomon Schenstein, five, and five for himself, and—all bills. A perfunctory glance and Ivan scattered them carelessly. Five! Well, his father could have them; he would enjoy them perhaps. He went on up the stairs, and stopped at the drawing-room door, as a slow voice called:

"Is that you, Ivan?"

He turned the handle and went in.

His mother lay on a sofa, low down by a little bright fire. She was looking up from her book as if she had been listening expectantly to his progress all the way up from the hall, and upon her face was that special, tiny, pleased smile which she kept exclusively for his entries. He looked at her, smiling too.

"Well, my dear."

"*Well*, my dear," she said, with her peculiar little mannerism of a stress, in her soft full tones. "You're dreadfully early. What will your father say?"

"Quite a lot, I expect," said Ivan; "but it's that affair at the Weinhers', to-night."

"Of course, I forgot," said Mrs. Schenstein, and added, "Well then, he'll be cross, but not so cross as usual. He rather likes you going to the Weinhers."

"I know," said Ivan. He came over, and took a seat in a low chair. Mrs. Schenstein lay back, gently regarding him. There was a silence. Then:

"You're not going to dinner?" she asked.

Ivan shook his head.

"They asked me, but I said I was much too busy to get off. Oh, no! I'm not going to dinner, but I thought I might as well come home all the same. I suppose you won't come, of course?"

"Dearest, I think not," Mrs. Schenstein shifted the cushions beneath her gracefully reposing head, "I don't feel awfully well. I don't think I could stand a Weinher dance to-night, and besides"—she stopped and shook her head. "No, I don't think I could possibly come."

"You want energy and resistance to stand a Weinher dance," admitted Ivan. "I shouldn't attempt it, if you don't feel like it."

"No, you go." Mrs. Schenstein's lovely eyes roamed the room slowly. "What time does it begin? You won't be going yet, surely?"

"I didn't ask, but I shall get in late."

"Your father said something, if I heard aright, about being late to-night," said Mrs. Schenstein. "Dinner is being kept back, but—"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll get some out. At the Club, I'm meeting some one, but, in any case, it's silly to eat before one of these Weinher celebrations. There's always such a terrific lot of stuff there. The buffet's always the most conspicuous feature, and that's saying a lot."

Mrs. Schenstein smiled. "Conspicuous feature," she murmured. "That's exactly it."

"Anyway," said Ivan, "I shouldn't be in at dinner to-night, here." He rose and stretched, looking down on his mother, "Matter of expediency if not diplomacy."

"Why?"

He laughed. "There are five gorgeous little bills await-

ing my dear, generous father; he won't want me as well, what?"

Mrs. Schenstein made some movement akin to a shrug.

"No, well then, perhaps not. . . . But . . . you really are naughty."

"Oh, Mum." Ivan looked at her with engaging seriousness. "I know."

"I'm afraid you have got it from me, Ivan," Mrs. Schenstein murmured pensively. "You've inherited the art of spending, the habit of extravagance, it's a great responsibility for me."

Ivan laughed. "Don't let it weigh you down. After all, it isn't as if he can't do it. For all the talk we hear of the Firm's bad years, and the workhouse, I happen to know for a fact that his resources are more than equal to any pressure I may put upon them. The truth is, darling, we're rich, deeply, disgustingly rich; the War was a money-making concern for us. While I was in it father was turning it to excellent account, and now I don't see why I shouldn't come in for a bit of what he gained. I haven't a qualm. You should hear what our Firm's reputation is all round, and then father will come home with a satisfied smile and 'What's this, more money for me to pay out; do you think I'm made of it, you'll ruin me.' It's his way."

Mrs. Schenstein nodded. "I know."

Ivan moved.

"I'm going to change," he said. "I shan't come back before the dance."

He laughed again a little. "Funny, isn't it? Father pays up for me always in the long run, however much he talks first, and yet, well, there are men up there, about four times my age, more or less, getting what I spend on a lunch, and . . ." he paused.

"Underpaid?" suggested Mrs. Schenstein.

"Oh, no, there's surprisingly little of that in our Firm, considering, but . . . it's a funny comparison, that's all.

You'd know what I mean if you saw a few of them." He went out, laughing.

Mrs. Schenstein stared reflectively into the fire. She had these ideas as well, and understood what sudden flash of insight moved Ivan. It was nice of him, and he always said just what came to his mind. Steps sounded overhead. And to-night he was going over there. His relations wanted him; they never gave a dance to which he was not invited. They wanted him. Mrs. Schenstein sighed a little. It was a distinctly disturbing thought. A moment more she stared, preoccupied, into the clear, beautifully balanced spaces of her drawing-room, then, taking up her book, calmly, with delicate composure, she resumed the thread of the tale.

. . . . . .

For Mrs. Weinher particularly, it had been an extremely successful evening. Preparations were often so worrying and intricate, matronly anxiety and housewifely pride somehow so often got irritated, and so often, when all was over, it seemed as if, after all, the thing had scarcely been worth the trouble entailed. But to-night it was different. As sometimes happened, the affair seemed to possess that indefinable spirit, that something, without which all was flat. It was inexplicable, a matter of pure luck. In a gold chair, Mrs. Weinher sat with a friend. She could see everything very nicely. There were a good many people, but really plenty of room. But, of course, the two rooms with the folding doors open and curtains draped to hide them, did make a good-sized floor. The lighting was excellent too. Violet shades; it was only fair to the girls, they looked so pretty in the soft shadowy light. Mauve was so kind to the complexions. And the flowers. Monty had seen to them, and he had a wonderful taste for that sort of thing. Flowers made such a difference in a thing like this. You couldn't have too many of them. They were so pretty! Then the music; Mrs. Weinher turned

to it, arranged behind cleverly banked-up palms. It seemed all right. These men back from the War, some of them played very well. Glad to get the job. After three years, too! And men who had fought so well, and now only too pleased to play for people to dance to! It seemed sad when you thought of it. But, no doubt, they didn't make a bad thing out of it. So many people seemed to dance nowadays. There must be plenty of work going. Mrs. Weinher leant back a little. These chairs weren't exactly what one could call comfortable, but they weren't being used much. How these young people, and not all so young, either, danced! There seemed to be so much energy nowadays, she couldn't do it herself to save her life. Round and round, when they weren't going up and down, and the most extraordinary dances, and so hot as it was, and yet no one seemed to get tired. It was the worst of being so fat. You weren't up to the exertion. And where was Julius? Mrs. Weinher glanced about.

"I was trying to see if I could catch a sight of Julius," she said, in answer to her friend's inquiring look. "Ah, there he is!" Yes, there he was. Julius. He always enjoyed this sort of thing. It was wonderful how young he managed to keep. There was nothing he so greatly liked as a jolly party, with all the friends gathered round, and plenty of talk and laughter. Well, it was nice, and he needed a little relaxation after a long, busy day. It might have been something far worse. Dances were so healthy. In spite of all any one liked to say about wine and music and so on, going to the head, there was nothing, so long as it was conducted on the proper lines, quite so safe as a nice dance. And he had got a rose in his button-hole; that hadn't been there all the evening. Well, well. Mrs. Weinher smiled a benevolent, broad-minded smile. The friend's voice sounded in her ear, "Sadie looks nice."

Mrs. Weinher turned to look at Sadie. She was coming past in this funny sort of sideways stride, her thick hair

bound and glossy; her cheeks pink and perfect, and her figure . . . well, no one could say Sadie hadn't got a good figure, for all this talk about boyish outline, wood-nymph grace, and all the rest of it. Fashions change, and it wasn't every girl who could boast Sadie's splendid proportions. And after all, it was for Sadie that these affairs were really, primarily, arranged, and she always repaid the trouble. Mrs. Weinher's eyes followed her round the room proudly. Yes, Sadie did indeed look nice. Where, by the way, was Ivan Schenstein? Over there, yes, that was he, tall, by the window. He seemed to be enjoying himself. He'd found some one he liked, evidently. Well, and he, too, was a decided credit to the family. Tall and upright, handsome, well, at any rate very good-looking, though he had got a way of regarding most people as if he thought them rather fools. He looked at his father like that, Mrs. Weinher knew, and at herself, and at Mr. Weinher, and his Cousin Monty, and sometimes she thought he even had a glance for Sadie that made her itch to smack his cool impudent young face. He got it, of course, from his mother; she had just that same funny annoying look. It was something quite different—you knew it in a moment, and it made you feel you'd like to say something outright. He was terribly like her in lots of ways. But he certainly did look very nice, standing there, talking away. He always had plenty to say. And he danced, so Sadie told her, divinely. Who was that he'd got hold of, by the way? Mrs. Weinher peered. It was a wide stretch across the room, and her eyes weren't quite so keen as they had been. Oh, yes, of course, that girl, Sadie's friend, staying with them at present. Anne Hurst. Very nice she was, and fond of Sadie, but . . . Mrs. Weinher's eyes rested reassured. It didn't matter, she was such a fair, slim, *ordinary* little creature. Not bad looking in her way, but not, of a surety, anything like Ivan's style, or for that matter, the style of any other man present. And

besides, she was a Christian. It must be all right. She turned.

"Past one," she said. "It's getting on."

"They won't want to stop yet," the friend said, "I know."

"I don't know how they do it." Mrs. Weinher nodded benignly at some one passing. "Even just to sit up like this, long past midnight, I seem to feel it for days afterwards. Julius tells me I'm getting old. I suppose that's what it is."

"It is tiring," agreed the other. Her voice was very patient, but her eyes, as they wandered about the room, were rather strained. She, herself, had a daughter and a son upon whom to keep an eye, and she had none of Mrs. Weinher's feelings of satisfaction. She was beginning to wish she had not brought her son. Champagne always made him worse than ever; but there was nothing to be done, save sit and sit on for ever, up against the wall and watch.

"There's Monty," she remarked.

Mrs. Weinher's glance followed hers. There, indeed, was Monty—apparently just come in. Archie Berrholt was with him, a silly young man whom she had never been able to like. But Monty seemed happy enough. He looked . . . a descriptive adjective occurred to Mrs. Weinher that she would not altogether have chosen—"smooth," sleek-haired, with his long pallid face, immaculate clothes, thin legs and narrow, active feet. Smooth! Dear Monty! Suddenly she began to watch. He had come up to Ivan, who, of course, had flung out some kind of remark. And Monty smiled—she could see his teeth flash from here, and the other smiling too, his leisured, rather disconcerting smile, with lips that were fuller than Monty's and quite different, curling slowly, his broad brows raised in peculiar mockery. Then Monty spoke to the girl, and young Archie laughed, and Ivan stared su-

perbly, before, in his indifferent way, he turned back to her. It was very—pretty. She knew the kind of thing. She turned. The friend was talking.

"Yes, my dear," she answered. "That's exactly what I always say."

Sadie came past again, clasping Alphonse Hammerstein about his wide shoulders, smiling gently to herself, then, more broadly, at her mother, her eyes half closed, her face rapturous with the gaudy passion of the music. Mrs. Weinher looked at her, then across the room, but they had gone, Ivan and the girl. It was shameless the way they were monopolizing each other, but people were shameless nowadays. She looked at her companion.

"Well, my dear, it's getting near the end now, I think. I must find Julius. They'll begin to go, soon. It's been very enjoyable, hasn't it?" She rose; the friend got up too.

"Very," she said. "I must come too. I've got to find Rupert."

Two somewhat ungainly, yet withal, not entirely undignified old figures, they went forth, to mingle with the crowd.

In the hall, when every one had gone, Mrs. Weinher turned to Anne Hurst.

"You enjoyed it, my dear?"

"Very much, thank you, Mrs. Weinher."

"That's right, we must have another before you go. Plenty of time yet. Yes, it was good fun, I think. Sadie, you liked it?"

Sadie, kneeling by the glowing firelight, laughed.

"Mother! need you ask! I always do enjoy a dance. I've danced my shoes shapeless. I don't think I missed one."

Mrs. Weinher stood a moment, then—

"And how do you like Sadie's cousin, my dear?" she inquired.

Sadie answered for Anne.

"Oh, Ivan. You know him, Mum. He made himself at home. He liked *her* all right. What did he say to you, Anne? Did he flirt? He always does."

Anne laughed rather sleepily. "Oh, yes," she said, "I suppose so."

Sadie laughed. "He would!" she said.

A moment's silence, then Mrs. Weinher moved.

"Well now," she said briskly, "I've managed to have some nice hot coffee ready without keeping the servants up. So come along and have it." At the head of the staircase Monty appeared.

"Father wants you, mother," said he. "And the coffee's getting cold."

In the first gray of the morning Ivan Schenstein entered his home. In the hall a light burned dimly, and a dying fire, like the warm heart of the silence, glowed in the shadows. He laid down his hat and gloves, and stood for a moment by the fire, assimilating the soft all-pervading hush. Then he ascended the stairs. He went to his mother, knowing from long experience that she would be up awaiting his return. Waiting, silent and still, listening for the sound of his step, yet giving no sign and, he knew well, that if he were not to come, her disappointment would be as deep and real as if he were her lover.

In her room she was, down on the floor in a glow of flame, with a gleam of rings on her fingers, and a shimmer of silk round her knees. He came in softly, for these times were secret, in a manner stolen, whilst his father slept and snored near by, and there must be no noise.

"Well, my dear," she whispered.

He sat down near her on a sofa, in the warmth, and she gave him coffee and asked what it had all been like.

"Oh, you know," he said, "much as ever. What's the word? Weinheristic. Can one say more? You didn't miss much. It wouldn't have appealed to you."

"Of course not," she said.

"No." Ivan stared at the floor intently, his cup between his knees, thinking . . . then:

"Music," he said. "At least plenty of noise, the air so thick with scent and heat that it hung round your forehead, powder so that my coat sleeves are ruined, wine not so bad, general atmosphere of geniality and good temper. Monty, the son and heir."

She laughed softly. "Well, I'm glad you went," she observed. "You have to go now and then."

Ivan nodded, his gaze deep in the fire. "Yes."

"And weren't there any new people?" asked Mrs. Schenstein, pouring out more coffee.

"Only one, I think," Ivan answered. "A girl, a friend of Sadie. Staying there or something."

"And what was she like?"

Ivan made no reply, only stared, his face heavy, as if he were busy on a hundred thoughts, and in his eyes lay melancholy like a black dog curled up before its familiar fireside. Then he moved:

"Like? Oh, a little different. She was a Christian."

His mother looked up. "No!" she exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes."

"What was she like?"

Ivan put his cup on the rug, and drew out his cigarette case. He extended the case. "Cigarette?"

Taking one, she held it, waiting for a light, thinking. And already a new thought had come to her, warm, intriguing, worrying, exciting. A Christian! . . . Different! . . . And Ivan . . . With a quick glance she searched his face. The light was so uncertain, shadows might mean anything. But she could see he looked, at any rate, preoccupied. What if . . . ? Mrs. Schenstein sat

on the rug thinking, as a child will sit, turning over a new toy, absorbed. But she knew one thing, he would say no more. After a time she spoke.

"I didn't let your father see any of those bills," she said. "He came home very late in a shocking temper, and then just to-night of all nights I had to tell him that . . . you know he's bought up some of that man's port, the one who went smash just lately?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you can believe such a thing, when it came this afternoon, the man dropped a case in the road, a few bottles broken, and the whole thing most horribly shaken up. It'll take years to settle. Well, I had to tell him that. Of course, it completely spoilt the whole dinner; he raged until he got indigestion."

Ivan smiled. "Why on earth did you have to tell him?"

Mrs. Schenstein sat up wearily. "My dearest, he had to know, and besides . . . I'm not afraid of him. I told him I thought he was making a ridiculous fuss. He ought not to drink port at all. Still that's that." She stood up, stretching slightly, her slim silk-covered arms held out with studied grace.

"Life, my dear Ivan. All made up of spoilt dinners, and the unseemly racket of a man's ill-temper. Dreadfully boring!"

"Dreadfully," agreed Ivan. "Yes, that's that, as you say. And as I suppose there really is a day's work in a few hours, however damnable it seems, I had better go and procure some sleep. Poor darling, what a foul evening, spent in ministering over some one who ought to know better. How do you manage to survive? Well, good night."

When he had gone Mrs. Schenstein stood, very tall and straight, before the fire, staring, a curious little smile curving her gently parted lips; then suddenly she sat down again, drew the folds of her wrap about her, and remained so in the increasing cold and the lifting dusk of dawn, for quite a long time.

CHAPTER II

IVAN VISITS A CLIENT

SADIE WEINHER stood, tall and splendid, before her mirror, in the full revel of that delicious after-lunch revolution of attire, changing one's dress. She had reached the stage when, leisurely, she inspected her appearance.

Unsupported by any particular strength of intellect, by any self-possession, by any specially refined powers of perception, Sadie, yet, all unsuspected by most, did possess some unlooked-for quality of self-knowledge, some species of critical faculty, and this was invariably offended after one long, straight stare into her glass.

She was self-conscious, poor girl, but not self-deceived, and no realization of lustrous hair, falling with oily gleam over ample bust and shoulders, far below her waist, could atone to her for the thickness of that waist, and she cared not a fig for the luxury of her lips, nor the rare splendor of her eyes, since her size was ungainly, and she never could quite balance it upon her feet. She looked magnificent and outrageous, and well she knew it, although denied, by some decree of Providence, the relief of an aptitude for defining her impressions. But she wore the beautiful silken things that pleased her, especially the soft clinging ones, beneath her dresses, and found comfort, however barren, in them. Slowly she turned at last and began to assume her dress. It was afternoon, warm and sunny, delightful, when the whole household was either asleep or sleepy, and there was not the slightest reason to be quick in any way. She pulled the tight, new folds over her head, and

drew them all down very carefully. Nothing, to Sadie, ever seemed so wicked as the way delicate afternoon frocks of fashionably slender cut split so easily when she put them on. She sighed as she buttoned the sleeves; buttons met, even at her wrists, so charily and she would have given her hair to have really slender wrists. And when all was done, and the powder used, and the scent-spray (for if it be in the nature of humanity to crave, each one, his particular salve for his wounds, so Sadie, by instinct, sought in many scents and strange aromas some satisfaction for her longings), and she had hung upon herself her profusion of jewels, she went downstairs . . . and in the thin gold and silence of her sunlit room, the bed was strewn with beautiful things of every color, and disordered crystal gleamed among the silver on her toilet table, and her hand-mirror, upturned, cast a little radiance, like light dissolved and liquid, to shift and quiver upon the ceiling.

Perhaps Sadie was one of those happy people, if such there are, who constitutionally, out of the lassitude and laziness of their disposition, are very well content with their existence. She had wants, and now and then she discovered something in her life that she would have altered, but she seldom brooded, had not quite enough imagination to conjure up alternatives, and would have found any active or lasting discontent a tax upon her energy.

And then with the sincerity of her warm heart, she was deeply attached to her parents.

Common sense, and that sense rather less common, keen sense of value, told her that she was singularly blessed, since what she was accustomed to think of as her "position" in life, was good and assured—since she could buy her clothes without being first obliged to earn the wherewithal to pay for them, since she possessed friends and good health and amusement, and, indeed, most of the excellent things that money can generally procure. But, at the same time, she perfectly understood with that small, secret part of her

which was clear and unerring and disturbing, that this and that and the other were not as she would have them. That, though her parents might consider her beautiful, according to a standard which appealed to a certain strange delicacy and refinement in Sadie, she was not as she should be. She felt, with all the agony of a sensitive soul, that she was too big, too stout, too heavy, too obviously good-looking, too utterly flamboyant and overdone. She had felt it at school when, clumsy and tortured, she moved among what had always seemed to be hosts and hosts of lovely, slender little creatures. She knew it when she went out and stared enviously at what appeared to be a world of supple, swaying figures with lovely hands and feet, and she felt it more poignantly than ever every time she looked at her friend, Anne, whose whole appearance was so slender and fragrant and fair. Nobly, Sadie tried to appreciate the qualities she herself had not, and yearned for, but it seemed so hard that she should be chosen to illustrate again and again the essential comparison between herself and her friend. Thus she had one trouble. And then she disliked her brother Montague, and wished he would not persist in living in the house. It seemed sometimes, knowing Montague as she knew him, that he did so on purpose to annoy her. And then there was this ridiculous and hopelessly far-fetched ambition of her parents, who, in the pride of their hearts, seemed seriously to want her to wed Ivan Schenstein. Sadie was, in what she termed "a way," rather fond of Ivan, because he was her cousin, and it was innate in her to be rather fond of relatives. He thrilled her a little sometimes, too, since he was handsome and seemed always smoldering with some curious intensity and fire, some spirit, which drew her rather somnambulant spirit out of its warm resting-place, though but to leave it, once out of the safe abode, lost and deserted, a timid and vulnerable spirit, cruelly treated, to find its way home.

But more than that there was nothing. Home was too comfortable to be lightly quitted, and there was not one compatible characteristic between them, and then . . . did not this beautiful Ivan, who made such gallant show of a superfluous, vaunting chivalry and quipping regard, to her face, gaze at her at the same time with the license of interested but, nevertheless, contemptuous eyes? Did not her *naïveté* of speech, simplicity of outlook and awkward manner amuse him, for some reason, vastly, though Sadie could not begin to conceive why. But she had come to know of one of his apt references to herself—"A great brassy weighing machine, with all the weights on the wrong side, and too much oil in the works." Sadie had laughed, and told herself that she was not to be easily hurt by young Ivan, but . . . however clever and forgivable that sort of thing was, one could not marry on such things. It was, after all, what he thought of her. If her mother only knew! If her father, who had the project more to heart than any of them, only knew! . . . But they did not know, or, at any rate, they would not. And it was not the slightest use telling them. Talk of Ivan's uncharitable badinage to her mother, and she would but get disturbed and indignant explanations. Mention such a matter as fundamental incompatibility of character to her father, and he would think she was not very obliging, and, moreover, not very nice. No, for one who had always adopted the line of least resistance, it was better far to wait and be silent, and keep what she knew to herself. And her parents would blunder on, and never realize for one moment's insight, that Ivan was peculiar, a deadly mixture of two very strong strains, that he was a good deal more like his mother than his father, but still a little like his father, and that not for any family expediency or family principle would he marry her, Sadie Weinher, the "great brassy weighing machine" . . . oh, but she must forget that.

But . . . make no actual demur, take it all easily and be not disturbed. To Sadie, the easiest method of evading a point.

Thus was even Sadie's pleasant and easy existence plagued and importuned, as are all existences, by complications. And something of this passed through her mind as she went downstairs to join Anne. Suddenly, as she thought, she gave vent to a sort of mental giggle. Suppose Ivan were to take a liking to Anne! The other night . . . every one had noticed it. And she was, of course, just the type he would take it into his head to admire. He prided himself upon being such a fastidious connoisseur. Anne would be with them for some time yet. Things might get funny!

She opened the door of her sitting-room.

"Hullo!" she said. "You must have thought I meant to stay all day."

But Monty was there, and her cheery smile altered slightly in character. Monty hadn't a shadow of a right to be there.

"Hullo!" she said again. "You here?" and came into the room.

There was something rare—something not to be met with every day about Montague Weinher. He was unforgettable, with a smack of harlequin about his sleek, utterly black scull-cap of hair, and a touch of the fantastic about his curiously light manner. Mephistopheles, himself, never had eyebrows more expressive; ready, accommodating smile, more secret and disconcerting, or peaked ears more true to type, while the whole gamut of diabolism could offer no more fascinating subtlety than was held, live and quivering, in the suggestion of inhuman virility about his spare, active frame. Wit had Montague, sense of humor, of value, of art, and the essential fitness of things, along with his creaseless clothes and shining shoes, and yet despite it all, there lingered about him, as elusive

and undefinable an atmosphere, as unpleasant as only atmosphere can be, the essence of his personality—inferiority, inequality, the insistent suggestion of the second-rate. The civilian exquisite over the lithe acrobat of an Eastern Café —that was Montague. His character eked out some existence under the patronage of the not altogether inadequate foster-mother of his acquirements. His intuition was commerce, either in love, money, or friendship, and his reputation enjoyed all the lack of definition of shade. He hated Sadie as greatly as she hated him; indeed if anything, rather more completely and comprehensively. No one liked him very much, and he liked no one. But he knew well the uses of silence, and when humility was expedient. On the whole, the world accepted him with very fair goodwill, and he mocked, grave-faced at such complete lack of discernment.

And now, just at present, he had a mood to concentrate upon Anne Hurst. Her silent self-possession intrigued him, and since her eyes could stare his out, without losing their lure or their dignity, he felt she must have got something worth having somewhere; quite what, he did not know, but, like a ferret at a rabbit hole, he meant to have it out. She was not easy to deal with, but, undaunted, he was beginning to get along famously. And then Sadie must enter, foolish and effete. . . . Montague sat back, with his gentle smile.

Anne was on the sofa, unembarrassed and serene, her face and neck and hands gold in the haze of sunlight.

Sadie sat down. "I always am an age when I get dressing," she explained genially. "I never have been able to hurry somehow. Hope you haven't been bored."

"Your brother has been very kind," said Anne in her clear, level tones. "He has been keeping me company, and telling me such a lot of interesting things."

Sadie laughed comfortably.

"Oh, you mustn't take a bit of notice of anything Monty

says," she observed. "He never means anything. It was probably all lies." She smiled with great good-humor.

Monty stretched his long arms over his head. His face slit in a gash-like smile.

"Really, what an extraordinary impression I have unwittingly managed to convey all these years. I feel sure Anne will accept my word that it is erroneous."

He looked at Anne, still smiling. "Sadie is perhaps inclined to incredulity; will you make me some allowance on that ground?"

Sadie laughed. "How you talk, Monty," she said.

There was a silence. Monty, never merely not talking, sat back as if he waited, alert, anticipating the next move. Looking at him, Anne had an impression that he might be engaged in some invisible intricate game of chess. That he moved his every thought, his every remark, upon some strangely conceived board, that he was an able player, one given to caution in placing, that he was bent, as a player should be, upon winning the game.

When Monty, finding the atmosphere tedious, went away, Anne got up and crossed to the window. She felt somewhat relieved. At his best she found Montague a strain. She looked down on the small Hampstead garden, laid out according to the taste of Mr. Weinher, with a cold profusion of stone jars and geraniums, but sunny and genial enough now. A pleasant place to go out to on a fine afternoon, but this family seldom made use of their garden as a resort. Occasionally it was employed for the partaking of a social tea, but then every one sat beneath an elaborate awning, amidst the magnificence of many cushions, and it was not at such times as much a garden as a parlor. Or perhaps, once in a while, Mr. Weinher would cause a luxurious hammock to be hung out and quilted with many rugs, and therein would take his Sunday afternoon siesta. But generally these people, so curiously highly civilized over such fundamental simplicity, preferred to see

their garden from a window, though Mr. and Mrs. Weinher, at least, held gardens in a respect that almost amounted to suspicion.

Anne, looking out, reviewed this, along with her position in the household. She was touched by the genuine kindness and whole-hearted hospitality she found herself receiving all the time. She reflected on Sadie's slightly anxious endeavors to make her feel "at home," and on the comfort she understood Mrs. Weinher gained from her slender fairness and the fact of her Christianity. They felt, she knew, that they could afford to be generous. Taken in the right spirit, Anne saw that it was all very interesting.

Sadie, from the sofa, regarded Anne's back against the light. It was a nice back, with the proper look about it, and she reflected vaguely, that Anne liked going to windows and staring out—she was that sort of girl. Different from herself, who always preferred to leave the open air alone. Anne was not self-conscious in the light as was she. She always felt slightly uneasy, vulnerable and exposed before wind and sun and outdoor things. . . . Breezes made her immediately untidy; the sun caused her eyes to water, or so she fancied. A hot-house plant, reared and flourishing behind glass, Sadie never felt at her best amidst natural surroundings. There didn't seem to be anything of that with Anne. Anne was lucky. Sadie, her feverish soul straining with the desire to make Anne realize that she was not, as might possibly seem, just a gaudy, easily satisfied creature of crude ideas, glanced about her. Sadie was aware that somewhere there did exist an ideal of beauty quite different from her own, though she did not know exactly what it might be. But the knowledge disturbed her, lest Anne's taste, esthetic, surely, and austere, should be offended. So many bright cushions, so many gay rugs, such a wealthy profusion of all that she, during the passage of many birthdays, had managed to collect, and could not

find it in her appreciative heart to put aside, so little untampered space—did all this possibly seem a trifle garish? Sadie, really obsessed with the desire to please the only friend she possessed who seemed to be different, absolutely different, from all else she knew, felt afraid. There was something pathetic about Sadie Weinher.

"Isn't Monty silly?" she said suddenly.

Anne laughed without turning.

There was a silence, then—

"Well, I don't think I ought to let him come here," Sadie said.

Again Anne laughed softly.

"No, but he really is the limit, though," Sadie, vaguely remonstrative, went on. "I wonder what he'd say to me if I started coming into his room at all hours. I call it the limit."

"But you never would," said Anne, still looking out of the window.

"I should think not," Sadie agreed. "I'd like to see myself. Still it'd be all the same if I did."

With the innocent, bemused eyes of a puzzled child, she sat, her feet crossed at a strange angle, and pondered on Monty and played with her chain.

And then Monty came back, bringing Ivan Schenstein. He had caught sight of him crossing the hall to the stairs. Monty, of whom some one had once said, "His jugular vein must be made of suspicion," and who had brought inquisitiveness to a fine art, could never let any one go anywhere in a house, without making it his business to see where they were going. You went upstairs, and Monty's head would, more than likely, pass below you, through the banisters. You stood for a moment upon the upper landing, and Monty, down in the hall, would glance up in a way that made you realize fully he was there. Such was Monty. So he had had to take Ivan upstairs.

"It seemed not a bad idea to come and see how you all

were," said Ivan, as they sat over tea, in that caressing atmosphere of little cups and little cakes. "You've been quite on my mind, Sadie, after the way you were dancing the other night. I'd no idea you kept up such a reserve of energy."

"Oh, Sadie's got energy like a balloon, full of air and always going up in the air," Monty told him.

Sadie, dispensing with the ungraceful gestures of one whose abnormal self-consciousness tends to render her desperately aware of the proceeding, pouring in a little more hot water with agonized care, and seeing to the right amount of sugar with frantic eyes, laughed.

"Do help yourself," she entreated.

Ivan and Montague talked, as men who secretly hate each other can talk. In a curious, glancing, insincere manner. With good-humor, but a dangerously careful refraining from insults. And Anne, listening, sipping her tea, began to understand a good deal.

Both Montague Weinher and Ivan Schenstein were in that peculiar position of disliking each other very much, and meeting suddenly upon common ground.

Animosity existed between them of that special, enduring, inexhaustible type, which lives, like a weed in a dark cellar, for generations, never growing above certain proportions, never really observed, save by those who may know something about the cellar and take the trouble to look, feeding upon incompatibility and comparative disabilities. Not a hatred that leads to battle, not a violence that leads to bloodshed, just an endless, passionless, instinctive loathing.

Perhaps never before had they agreed upon a single point, and now they both thought exactly the same about Anne Hurst. She was lovely to look at, unusual, with a certain pride of beauty that made beauty seem suddenly a thing to be pursued to the death, provoking with her little silences and her way of looking at one seriously, with just

faintly parted lips—unusually self-contained. . . . So that Montague, finding her alone, had approached as near to swearing as he ever did, when Sadie came into the room, whilst Ivan, whose visits to his relations were comfortably rare, came, and then came again, urged, perhaps, by some moving sensation of curiosity.

It may possibly be accounted a bad thing for enemies to possess a mutual interest.

Anne listening, with her little smile, glanced at Ivan, and speculated idly concerning him. As charming, she decided coolly, as only people with particularly strong personalities can be. Rather condescending with that easy smile. And those eyes, dark, with the dusky glow of a warm summer's night, seemed to denote the ardor of many desires. She tried to sum him up. Clever, selfish, artistic from racial heritage, and—what else? Something there seemed to be not quite . . . to tone. Suddenly she thought she knew. A fancy came to her that his mother was a peculiar sort of person, a tall, rather proud, rather unhappy woman, and not a Jewess. It seemed probable.

"I expect we shall have another jolly evening before Anne has to go," Sadie said.

"Why not have several?" asked Ivan.

Anne laughed. "You'll have plenty of time," she observed.

Ivan looked up and at her.

"That's good," he said. "And how long is that?"

Anne smiled. "Oh, plenty of time."

No, she didn't like him. Not really. She hadn't liked him much the other night. But . . . against thin-faced Monty, of the long, lingering fingers and shiny hair . . . it was only fair to admit the difference.

There was silence. Sadie broke it with her own inimitable eagerness. "Oh, Anne's going to stop with us for weeks. She hasn't got anywhere she could go to—only

a horrid old cousin somewhere, and her father was going away, so she had to come and stop with us. It was so lucky."

"Yes," said Anne, "it was. I would much rather be here than there." (Ivan was looking at her with a certain fascination.) "My father is inclined to be old-fashioned, and when I said I would take a flat somewhere, and be perfectly all right with a maid, he was absolutely horrified." She laughed. "I'm sure I can't imagine why."

"Fathers are the devil," Ivan said gloomily.

Out of a little silence, issuing sinuous and thin, like a black snake from a hole in the wall, came the voice of Montague.

"They're devilish useful sometimes, don't you think?"

Ivan took a fresh cigarette from his case, and lit it. He expelled the smoke, then said:

"Well, on the whole I was pretty useful to my father during the War. At least, so I look at it. Not that I did much, but still, I helped to keep him safe and warm at home. Now I take it it's his turn. I don't ask to be kept, but I've not the least objection to his being useful. After all," said Ivan, elaborating his theme, staring down his cigarette, "I didn't ask to be born. I dare say if I had been asked I should have refused. But since I was planted on the earth without having the least say in the matter, I really don't see why things shouldn't be made easy for me. I said all that to father once, but he seemed incapable of seeing the point, the subtle fairness of the argument. I think he thought I'd been drinking. As a matter of fact, I had."

Sadie shifted suddenly and giggled.

"Well," continued Ivan, with a superb air, "what I mean to say is—I put it to him, 'Here I am, sort of thing, and—well, you've only yourself to blame. What are you going to do about it?' But he can't see it." Ivan shook his head and stared at Anne with grave eyes. She laughed.

"Well, but that might go on for ever. I mean, every

one's put on the earth without having any say in the matter, and we can't all expect to be kept. At least, we can, but we shouldn't be."

"I'm speaking for myself," said Ivan.

"And that's just when you're always most eloquent," Monty observed.

"Of course."

"Well, I don't know," said Anne, "but it seems to me it's exactly the other way about. I think the only conceivable state of things is when every one, as soon as they are capable, begin to fend for themselves. My instinct for individualism would never allow me to believe in a sort of perpetual dependence system going on from father to son. It's immoral."

"But it does," Ivan pointed out. "However do you reconcile going, as you said you would have, to some one you didn't like, just because your father wanted you to, with your instinct for individualism? What made you take any notice of any antiquated ideas about the propriety of girls living alone? And what about fending for yourself? You don't fend for yourself any more than Sadie does. Instinct for individualism!" He scoffed. "But perhaps you think that only applies to fathers and sons."

"Certainly not," said Anne decidedly. Then, having some sense of humor, she smiled. "But I'm not going to be led on into making such an exhibition of myself as to start propounding on my instinct for individualism. But, what I mean is, that I don't think it right to—not to have one."

Ivan scrutinized her amusedly. "Instinct for individualism," he repeated. "It sounds like something you go to the dentist about. Have it out. I should. It may give you trouble some day."

Sadie laughed. "Painless extractions," she murmured inevitably.

There was a short silence. Then Ivan moved.

"Well," he said, "I forget exactly what I began by saying, but as far as my father is concerned, I'm more than willing to allow him all the opportunities for paternal generosity and philanthropy—call it that if you like—that he cares to take."

"You can't have much to grumble at then," came Monty's soft voice.

Ivan eyed him. "Have some more cake," he said crushingly.

Sadie roused to her social obligations, looked about her quickly.

"Oh, will any one," she began. "Do. I forgot to ask."

Anne with a glance at her watch got up suddenly.

"Do you know, I think I ought to go. I must go out for a little while. You don't mind, do you, Sadie?"

"Of course not." Sadie got on her feet slowly.

"Ivan, are you staying to dinner?"

"No, Sadie darling, much as it pains me to so disappoint you, I'm not. I couldn't possibly; dearly, of course, as I should love to. I only came in to fill an interval in the afternoon's routine. I left a nicely-worded note on the paternal desk, to the effect that I had gone to see a client, but when I get near you I can't tear myself away." He turned to Monty, still, as he had been all the time, back in the chair, and who grinned now, as he had grinned all the time.

"Montague, you lazy beggar, you never do anything. Spending a pleasant afternoon at home! You'll get fat, and become a disgusting spectacle. Take my advice, emulate my example, and do some work. Do a lot. Carry on. Take the burden of the business off your father's shoulders. Aren't you ashamed? Staying at home in Sadie's boudoir!"

"Well, certainly your advice should be worth something!" Monty slowly wreathed out of his chair. "You know such a lot about work, don't you?" He stood up,

bending and swaying with hunched shoulders. "By the way, isn't that excuse of yours getting rather stale?"

"Oh, well," said Ivan, "we haven't all got your resourceful imagination. Where are you this afternoon?"

Monty laughed.

"On the Baltic," he said.

"Very clever," said Ivan.

Monty eyed him with disfavor. Then he shrugged.

"Ah, well. How's Mama?"

Coming just then there was, somehow, a whole world of insult in the inquiry. Anne thought it told her almost everything she could wish to know.

"All right," said Ivan rudely. "I'll tell her you inquired."

After a moment's silence Anne spoke.

"Well, I must go."

Ivan took her proffered hand, and she went out of the room, leaving him still standing with Sadie and Montague. When she came down Sadie stood alone by the tea-table, smiling.

"He's gone," she said, turning. "Did you ever know such a perfect fool?"

"I shan't be long." Anne stood by the door.

"No." Sadie brooded for a moment over the tea-things, then she looked up.

"I say, fancy him coming again like that! I wonder what he comes for? I call it jolly funny."

Anne went away quietly from the speculation in Sadie's eyes. She walked down the road, with bent head, thinking, and, looking up, beheld Ivan in front, going as if he were supremely unaware of anything. And yet, Anne could not help reflecting, he must have timed himself to a nicety, in order to be just ahead of her as she came out a few minutes after he had left the house. "I shall pass him," she thought. But as she came up, Ivan looked round.

"Hullo," he said, easily. "Fancy you!"

Anne looked at him. He returned her gaze calmly, then smiled.

"No, of course, I meant this to happen."

"Why?" Anne asked. She could think of nothing else to say.

Ivan laughed.

"Oh, come!" he begged. "Don't ask why! What do you suppose was the reason? Because I wanted to talk to you, of course!" They were walking along slowly. "I think you're perfectly delightful. Wasn't it hopeless in that room? They're my cousins, you know. Well, you know what cousins are!" he went on, frankly. "You've got one yourself. Enough's as good as a feast, what! Well, this is how it is. I came to that dance on Thursday, more as a sort of yearly visit than anything else, and yet, strangely enough, here I am again on Tuesday." He looked down at her merrily. "Well, now, what do you make of that? Take your time, and think carefully."

After a moment Anne said:

"Is this supposed to be a joke, Mr. Schenstein? And can we walk a little quicker, please, I'm late already."

"You haven't thought," Ivan reproved her without quickening his pace. "So now I shall have to tell you. I came—what do you think—to see you. Yes, really. As I said, you're perfectly delightful. So that's why I came. Good heavens! You didn't think I came to see them!"

"I didn't—think much about it," said Anne.

"Well." They had reached the corner, Ivan stood still. "Think about it now. Think a lot. And let's hear the result on Friday. I've got a car. Quite a decent sort of affair, if you're fairly broad-minded about cars. On Friday I want you to come out in it. I must go now." He pressed the astounded Anne's shoulder reassuringly. "Don't forget, Friday. Circumstances considered, I fancy it might be more diplomatic to meet not absolutely outside the house, don't you know. So meet me at the tube station

at two-thirty, and don't be late. If you are, I shall simply come up here, and toot the horn joyously outside the gate. And at dinner you'll have to live it down. But I feel sure you won't force me to recourse to such an extreme measure. Good-by, then, for the present, and let nothing, however pressing, interfere." And with a kindly smile, and before, long before Anne could find words suitable and to the point, he was gone.

Somewhat dazed, Anne turned and traced her steps carefully along the pavement, her eyes on it as if she were looking for something. It seemed to her that, unwittingly, she must have managed to be very indiscreet.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD MEN

MR. SCHENSTEIN left a comfortable, if not positively luxurious business residence, every evening, shortly after six. Seldom later and hardly ever before, because he was an industrious little man, and moreover, an innately suspicious one. He preferred to remain and see for himself that his clerks kept their appointed hours and worked hard up to the last minute. He would take the tube home, for he held it more suitable and dignified that his wife, who was the woman, and whose social status reflected upon himself, should be allowed the almost exclusive use of the car, wherein she could be magnificent and look well.

And then, by returning home in the tube, he procured a long and reasonably comfortable journey for fivepence, a bargain with which he always felt peculiarly satisfied.

So, one evening, he started out as usual, a short, stout, nicely dressed figure, with brown fur to his well-cut coat collar, a gold-headed stick and a cigar, and he was just unfolding *The Times*, a journal of which he was inclined to think rather well as illustrating the exact balance of dignity, sincerity, high principles and decency together with few frivolous articles and a respectable maturity—in fact really excellent value for the money, when over its edge he beheld the gold-pince-nezed nose and serrated column of chins that formed the most conspicuous and impressive part of Mr. Weinher's face. Mr. Weinher who also could see the point of taking the tube. Mr. Weinher who belonged to the Firm, but not being quite so industrious, and having less cause and authority to be suspicious, generally left the office earlier, fortified by the possession of a

large enough interest and security in it to be able to do so. In short, Mr. Weinher. They exchanged nods, and when a space fell vacant opposite, Mr. Schenstein took it.

"Later to-night," he said amiably.

Mr. Weinher nodded.

"Something I was obliged to see to," he explained. "No good leaving these things over."

Mr. Schenstein nodded. He knew it. Indeed no good!

"And how are they all?" he inquired after a moment.

"Oh, very well," said Mr. Weinher. "Rachel" (Rachel was Mr. Weinher's wife) "is all right. So's Sadie. She's busy with her friend."

"Got some one staying?"

"School-friend of hers. Nice girl, but it means parties, fuss. Awful bother."

There was a pause. Mr. Schenstein gazed solemnly at the assured well-established appearance of the inscription heading his paper, *The Times*. Well, it was excellent to be sure. Made you feel there was still something to hold on to. He glanced sideways. There was a good deal he wanted to say. But, unaccountably, they so rarely seemed to meet. He glanced again. One couldn't talk in a place like this. But it was important; could he then, taking that into consideration, bring himself to issue to this, his cousin, an impromptu invitation to dine at his house? That was just the sort of thing he never did. Would the club perhaps be more suitable, but no, one couldn't talk, not to say *talk* at the club, and he would really have to make some opportunity. . . . Mr. Schenstein deliberated, then, firmly, he spoke.

"I've got something I rather wanted to discuss," he began. "I really meant to see you before. I suppose you wouldn't care to come home with me? Come and dine."

The tube rattled suddenly, and Mr. Weinher shook his head.

"Can't hear," he said.

Mr. Schenstein repeated the invitation.

"You can phone Rachel," he added.

Mr. Weinher did not seem to have many objections.

"All right then," said Mr. Schenstein. "I can give you a good meal. At least it suits me well enough. You don't mind?"

Mr. Weinher said he didn't. He had not Mr. Schenstein's rooted objection to dining out. And since he could guess quite easily the reason for it all, he was not even surprised. Dine at Berkeley Square!

He had not done that since—since the night of the first Zepp raid. Rachel would laugh. Thus is hospitality issued and accepted, thus do family relations exist upon a practical basis, thus do two old men go home in the tube.

And they sat, for the remainder of their journey, gazing gravely at nothing, with the strange vacancy of people aware of themselves among strangers. Only now and then would Mr. Weinher steal a furtive glance at Mr. Schenstein's smooth, dark face, at his chin, so blue and full, at his black eyes, seeming to protrude from little loose sacks beneath them, and at the ample white curve of his nose; and what Mr. Weinher thought of it all, it would be a preposterous assumption to say, for who dare decide upon the notions in his large and heavy head, but something he must have taken in and considered, in those careful, furtive glances. And Mr. Schenstein, a little larger, a little more prosperous, a little more impressive, still had his seconds of sudden curiosity, when he observed Mr. Weinher, sleek, pale, rather young-looking, with his graduated row of chins, and his short-sighted warm brown eyes, and what *he* thought is simply beyond conception. But there, silently, they sat among all the other faces, whilst the colored panorama of the stations flashed by.

The heavy, slightly suggestive hush of a well-conducted household just before the dinner-hour, lay in the atmosphere of the Berkeley Square hall, as the two gentlemen

stood in it. Nothing obvious, nothing vulgar in that pleasant, velvety assurance, merely an opulent intimation of something very good to come. Quiet and dark was the hall, the low light softly radiant on ancient oak, suggestive of a burnished well-seasoned maturity, with a gleam of poppies in an ebony bowl.

Mr. Schenstein divested himself of coat and silken scarf.

"You won't have to wait too long," he said. "I make a point of that. We're always punctual. Come along up first."

With a sense of hush, almost of awe, upon him, Mr. Weinher followed up the wide staircase.

Mrs. Schenstein, coolly equable, superbly gracious, extended a graceful welcome. Mr. Weinher, a trifle inclined to be impressionable, felt the effect of her appearance rather as he had felt that of the hall.

He felt himself staring, wide-eyed. Yet she had changed very little, very little indeed. Perhaps some idea occurred to him, though Mr. Weinher was unused to thinking such things out very clearly, that since she must wear a mask, there could not be much alteration in her from year to year. Only the traces, gentle enough, of continual usage, slow wear and tear. A clever disguise, for she stood, calm, urbane, courteous, turning her smooth, graceful words. But what might lie beneath it, Mr. Weinher did not attempt to conjecture, that which it might be, passion, pain, patience, was too deep for him.

Her presidence at dinner was exquisite, Mr. Weinher was dumb beneath it. A silence seemed to overlay the table, not of her creation, rather of her. Conversation became endowed with a new subtlety, it was born and grew and flourished and faded like some rare flower, it died, but like the immortality of the garden, the silence still lived. It was not heavy, not oppressive, just an undefinable, elusive quality of serene reserve, as if for a long, long time two people had faced each other across the space of fair glass

and delicate blossom and conversed at rare intervals, refraining always from saying those certain things which were in their hearts. Mr. Weinher, appreciative of a meal, which, despite his best efforts, he could never quite manage to obtain at his own table, did not exactly think this, but again, some impression of it came to him.

With his gaze unconsciously fixed on the fall of lace at Mrs. Schenstein's delicate hollow bosom, where dark, old silver gleamed as she moved and swayed, Mr. Weinher cast his mind back to that former occasion during the War, but he could not remember that anything had been less perfect or less enjoyable, and yet at home Rachel scoured London frantically for the things she so often did not manage to obtain. During the War . . . with Ivan away, and the talk had chiefly concerned him. Not, if he could remember rightly, that she had said much, but Mr. Schenstein had been eloquent upon the subject, simply full of it, only natural of course, considering, but somewhat trying after a time, at least, so he knew, had Rachel found it.

Then later when Mrs. Schenstein was standing upright by the piano, lingering over it, in her own inimitable fashion, after the execution of one of those clever, outlandish pieces she was so fond of, the first crash, and then the confusion, anxiety over the children perhaps in danger, the extinguishing of all lights, a strange medley of noise, and worse than any noise, horrible periods of silence, some one, Mr. Schenstein probably, extraordinarily voluble over the obvious need for no fear, Rachel quarrelsome with nerves, the pallor of faces glimmering in the gloom, and then a voice, suddenly, sharply from the far wall: "Why can't you sit down? Standing up there!"

And there had been Mrs. Schenstein, erect, tense, a silhouette against the sapphire of the window-pane, her face up to the night sky with its lights and its stars.

Arranging cherry-stones at the side of his plate, Mr. Weinher recollected clearly how she had turned, "May I

play then?" in her soft remote tones, clear and unearthly as an echo from some far-off place. And Mr. Schenstein's discomfited, miserable grunt, and then, once more, as if nothing had happened, nothing were amiss, the slow dragging of those haunting tunes. What a night it had been!

Suddenly he turned to Mrs. Schenstein.

"You're not often at our place. Why don't you come over? Rachel would be delighted. She was only saying she hadn't seen you for some time."

Mrs. Schenstein passed her napkin delicately over her lips.

"Yes," she answered. "I will certainly come. Thank you very much."

Mr. Weinher was silent, the gratitude was disconcerting.

"Any time," he murmured awkwardly.

"Thank you. I have had very little time lately," said Mrs. Schenstein.

"I don't know what you do with your time," Mr. Schenstein remarked, and his voice held that unhappy, grumbling note it so often did, now that he was growing old. "I don't know what you do with your time. You don't do overmuch going out. You might go out more and do yourself no harm. Why don't you go over and see Rachel sometimes? It would do you good. You want company."

Mrs. Schenstein regarded him with gentle irony over her glass.

"Thank you," she said. And then, "These figs are excellent, I believe, if you care to try them," she turned to her guest. Mr. Schenstein regarded the figs morosely.

"I oughtn't to take this kind of thing," he observed. "Sweets or savories, it's all the same. These things upset me. When are you off away?" he added to Mr. Weinher.

Mr. Weinher knew he meant holidays.

"Holidays? Oh, I don't know," he said. "I can't leave yet. Later I am thinking of trying Harrogate for a week or two. It's what I'm supposed to be needing. I don't

care for holidays in the ordinary sense of the term. Rachel will go when she thinks she will. Somewhere south, I shouldn't wonder. She likes it warm. San Sebastian. Somewhere that way. And Sadie. I don't know about Sadie, she may go with her mother, or she may not. It depends. We've got this friend of hers staying for some time yet, I believe. But whatever they do, they're sure to get through plenty of money."

"I don't mind a good holiday, myself," observed Mr. Schenstein. "Not that I get one often. I'm tied at present, but later on . . . I shall see. What about Monty?"

"Oh, Monty's like Ivan," Mr. Weinher smiled indulgently. "He likes his little change every now and then. He's very fond of Brighton. Goes down there very often for the week-end."

"I like Brighton," said Mr. Schenstein.

The low greenish light cast a haze, pale and strange, over the table. Under it things seemed slowly to fade, to change, and then change again. Each slender, gently swelling wine-glass dwelt within its own little grayish pool of reflection: shadows crept, emerging from the dark, moved and hovered, and merged again.

"Yes, I like Brighton quite well," said Mr. Schenstein.

Suddenly, with her hand at her throat, Mrs. Schenstein rose. She bowed to Mr. Weinher, and slowly, half-smiling, with a trailing movement that produced upon that slightly dazed gentleman another of those troublesome impressions he could not formulate, she left the room. Neither he nor Mr. Schenstein moved, and the door shut quietly, with a curious suggestion of her presence receding slowly from it. There was silence. Then:

"Try one of these," said Mr. Schenstein, offering his cigars. "Holst and Bergen. One of about three places where you can get a good cigar, in my opinion." Mr. Weinher took one. Mr. Schenstein eyed them mournfully, then he shook his head. "I haven't looked at anything

else for years," he said with regret, "and now I'm told they're not for me. Too strong. That's what comes of getting old."

Mr. Weinher nodded with the comfortable sympathy of a junior. "Ah, yes, I know," he said.

Mr. Schenstein took a sip from his glass, and eyed the table with heavy dejection. Mr. Weinher leant back in placid anticipation. Silence came again. With his eyes slightly vague from his dinner, Mr. Schenstein was considering very carefully. For a moment he weighed pros and cons. He knew, oh, well he knew, that one could never be too careful. It was a bad thing to go rushing into anything. At the same time . . . then, Mr. Schenstein, essentially practical, decided. The distrustful scruple that drew him always from approaching a point quickly or directly—from, in fact, ever, if he could possibly avoid it, approaching a point at all—from, further, ever saying exactly what he thought or felt about anything of any importance, he put down firmly. This was a time, one of those times, when a few direct words straight on the theme were what was needed. He began:

"Well, I daresay you know pretty well what I want to talk about." Mr. Weinher nodded in silent assent.

"I want just to say a few words concerning the—the project I think we've all got in mind concerning your girl and Ivan."

"Yes," said Mr. Weinher. After all such was the case. They had got it in mind.

"You're favorable to the proposition I know."

A project, then a proposition! Mr. Weinher, whom forty years of continual totaling up of figures had made precise and accurate, said slowly:

"Ivan's marriage to Sadie? Yes."

Another silence. Mr. Schenstein's eyes went back to the table, as if for inspiration. Like the smoke of those splendid cigars, many reflections rose up, floated and faded,

alluring, unsubstantial and elusive in his brain. His son. That was the point. This was to be about his son. What could he, what could he not say? And it was just about him that so much he felt, so much, still worse, that he feared, could never be mentioned, still less explained. At last he spoke:

"It seems to me the best thing that could happen. I've known it for a long time. I want him to have your girl," he paused for a moment, then continued: "And it would be all perfectly plain sailing if only the boy were not so . . ." (Mr. Schenstein said "foolishly" where a lesser man would have said "damned") "so foolishly full of his own ideas and opinions. . . . I suppose he's got the steadiest, most advantageous start in life any man ever had, the safest, though, mind, I don't say perhaps the best so far as thorough learning of the business is concerned, but a good start though, and all he can do, so far as I can see, is to fool about and take advantage of my generosity."

"Why," inquired Mr. Weinher, "do you let him take advantage? He's dependent upon you."

Mr. Schenstein might have answered simply, "Because he's my son," and laid bare the whole reason, but the possessive instinct, virile force within him though it was, was something too deep and primitive to be spoken of. Himself, he hardly realized its presence, or its power, and to confess it to others, to mention the influence that his property exerted over him—there was nothing Mr. Schenstein was less likely to do. He merely growled faintly, and took another sip at his glass. After a little while, Mr. Weinher said thoughtfully:

"There's a good deal to be said for it."

Mr. Schenstein nodded. And again some of those thoughts began their curling and wreathing in his brain.

Quite how much there was to be said for it even he, himself, could scarcely estimate. The salvation of his every ideal and aspiration, both spiritual and social, the

materialization of his every hope, so much he knew. More than enough to make the accomplishment an aim superseding all others. During a life, on the whole, carefully planned, and nicely executed, Mr. Schenstein, in the years when the passing of many experiences leave us still amazingly rash, had made one great mistake. Regarding it now, after the passage of still more experiences, he found it glaring. Once, what madness had possessed him! his sense of values had been overridden, for once he had not considered the future, calculated the consequences. Folly, and he had paid for it dearly, and now . . . Those solid, patiently constructed ramparts seemed to creak and totter in their very foundations under the steady, soundless onslaught of his wife's reserved opinions. He had taken a strange, alien influence into his house, a subtle poison, thinking these things of small account, and despite all the oppression in the world, despite every kind of annihilating force, insidious, secret, unsuspected, the influence was felt, the poison worked. He would not have believed it possible. How was it that one could not preserve for oneself, unviolated, that which was one's own? He had imagined himself a force, an all-presiding power, and behold, after the years, he must wonder, ponder, in a tumult of doubt. She was there, where he had placed her, and in her very presence lay the perversion of his whole household. His son. In him, bitterly, Mr. Schenstein knew it, lay her mighty power. She held a strength in the child that evaded every attempt to crush it, every effort to circumvent its workings. He had wanted that child, had thought a child would inevitably turn a combatant against her. His child! And behold in him she superseded everything.

He was hers. Useless to overlook the fact, futile to deny it, and, simply and naturally in the course of things, she had made him her ally, never her opponent. The knowledge of it all bit deep into Mr. Schenstein's heart. And with the years the forces grew. She and Ivan!

He was like her, he had that bit of her in him which would always inevitably make him hers. He, oh, immeasurable evil, saw her point of view. She had brought him up, in spite of all his efforts to prevent it; firm tactics, his careful overseeing during all the years, and still she had managed somehow to gain a footing, till now they stood together, allied in some strange undefinable relationship. Something beyond and quite independent of any natural tie, and at last she, with the strength of his support, was free. Free! Mr. Schenstein knew it, no fatuous habit of self-deception concealed the truth from him. She might not realize how things had worked out, so carefully and systematically did he cover the truth from her eager gaze. Still, like a thing tied down and caged for years, in the moment of release, she might lie, and move, and worry, and strain, not realizing that the bonds were severed at last, but severed they were, and whether she could perceive it or not made very little real difference, only kept her at his side the longer, she who he knew had so many things she wanted to do.

And her son would help her, the while his son would never help him.

So he had paid the price of folly. And now he was old. He stood alone, little enough around for comfort. Only the continual realization of the emptiness of aims. He had wanted a son, and the son he had got was worse sometimes, he felt, than any want had been; he had refused to see danger, and danger stared him in the face; he had seen and tried to repair the damage for which he himself was responsible, and the hurt defied all efforts, and all through this woman, with her beauty and her Christianity.

He stood alone, but there still remained one power to his hand. Very carefully he had seen that his son should at least never be allowed any means of being independent

of him. Managing to this end, he had hardly understood his motive at the time. But he had known always, somewhere, in the furthest recesses of his mind, that if his son needed him, looked to him, depended upon him, then, indeed, he would never be entirely robbed of all dominion. Foster a luxurious temperament and a trend for self-indulgence, then see that he never learnt the trick of providing his own means. And he had managed to accomplish that much. Ivan, clever, with scope within himself for any brilliancy, could do practically nothing. Thank God, Mr. Schenstein felt, he could have his way, dictate to his son upon any point, force his will upon him, for did he not keep him? That proud, arrogant young man, where would be his pride, his arrogance, his superb contempt without him? What could Ivan do that was worth more than the labor of the merest clerk?

It was a wonderful thing, a far-seeing provision, a power worth holding. And so when Ivan knew that his father desired something, that he would have his son obey his behest, could it be conceivably possible that he would be so foolish, so short-sighted, as to attempt defiance? Surely not. Ivan, who depended so much upon the wherewithal to do this and the sufficiency to have that. Ivan, who had been reared to regard even a little less the most terrible destitution, would Ivan display so slight a sense of values as to refuse him anything? And when he had his way, Mr. Schenstein knew then with perfect confidence how it would be. This marriage brought about, and her day would be over; she might go or she might stay, but never more would she have power to draw Ivan, persuade and influence him.

Ivan would be secured, and his will would be done. With new ties, other interests forming, proper positions would be arranged at last. She would have her stand assigned to her; Ivan wedded to this girl, it would be all over. No longer would Mr. Schenstein have to fear her sway. Nothing would matter any more. And well she

knew it, and how she feared it, how she relied, now more than ever before, upon that of herself in Ivan!

Well, granted that she might be in him—but there were other things too. There was love of wealth, and perhaps bits here and there of him who was father. An appreciation, for instance, of expediency. Possibly; anyway, alone as he stood, with that force of money, Mr. Schenstein knew he would still be able to have his way. There was no doubt of it.

And strangely enough, it was not for a moment that Mr. Schenstein had in him any motive of cruelty or propensity, greater, at any rate, than that in all mankind, for hatred. A tyrant he was in his very nature; ingrained and innate within him was the attitude of absolute mastery. But this was a matter concerning that ancient battle-ground for the oldest of disputes, that most enduring antagonism, a question of race. Mr. Schenstein had overlooked it. He had imagined that Christianity, so long as it well knew its proper place, could not be appreciably formidable. He thought of it as a creed, and forgot that it was a strain.

And when he found that something indefinable, but definite, worked insidiously, spread poison in his house, that he had taken something in, the true nature of which he had not dreamt, he was puzzled and angered, frightened, and consequently fierce. It was like the presence of a foreign body in the eye; one could not be unaware of it. She had her own ideas, ideas of which he had never thought. If she imagined she was going to bring them into his house . . . He set to work to prevent her, tried to circumvent her influence over his son, and was filled often with a desperate unreasoning annoyance that the son was also hers. Whatever it was she managed to do, Mr. Schenstein felt she must be doing it on purpose to thwart him! And it was impossible to speak because there never seemed to be anything about which *to* speak.

And he never quite saw that beyond her deliberate en-

deavor to hold sway over her son, beyond her studied, though quiet, self-assertiveness, the core of the trouble lay deep in that she, as he, was possessed of the ideas, standards, conceptions of countless generations, absolutely incompatible one with another.

But he was angry. Mr. Schenstein, whose pride lay in his accurate knowledge of values, his practised eye, his inability to make a mistake, was bitterly angry that he should have allowed himself to be so deceived.

She had looked such a beautiful addition to a well-filled house, such a nice thing to take about with one; how was he to know; a bad bargain. Oh, shame! shame!

And then, of course, it was a question of woman. . . .

Instinctively Mr. Schenstein felt that woman must be a thing inferior. No persuasion of civilization or experience or environment would serve to alter his fundamental principle of life. He could not recognize equality. You were either the greater or the lesser, and if existence were to maintain its balance of decency and fitness and relative values, then woman clearly could never be the superior of man. If he had not felt this and carried out his conviction, where, argued Mr. Schenstein on occasions of great intimacy with his soul, would his own married life have been long ago? Decidedly and obviously in entirely the wrong place. It was a galling, though a wonderful thing to meet a man who was above one, but who ever heard of meeting a woman? The thing simply could not be endured.

In Mr. Schenstein's very kindness and generosity towards his wife lay the key to this deep-rooted instinct which guided it. It was most important to treat those below one in any way, very nicely. No decent person ever ill-treated a dog, but it was nevertheless extremely decent to assert one's authority when that was most unfortunately questioned . . . not for a moment that Mr. Schenstein pos-

sessed any propensity for cruelty, only a principle, sublime in its simplicity, a deep-seated, subconscious point of view.

And now it had been brought forth, dragged most inconsiderately from its hiding-place by that unreasonable being, that creature of subtle defiance, who knew her last hope well enough, and was making her last stand.

He turned to Mr. Weinher.

"I wish Ivan to marry Sadie," he said slowly and distinctly, "there can be no doubt that it is the right thing. It is the only thing. I . . ." He paused before adding, "I have had the idea in mind ever since they were born." It was not quite the thing to say to Mr. Weinher. There was not the least necessity to present him with too enlarged an estimate of his own importance. He substituted something a little different. "I have considered the whole subject from all its many sides, and I have arrived at the conclusion that a marriage between families, as I think has been proved before now, can be an exceedingly successful and excellent thing." Which was sufficiently conclusive, while really committing him to nothing whatever.

Mr. Weinher, who had likewise considered the subject from all its many sides, nodded over his cigar.

"Quite so," he observed modestly.

"Generally speaking, I am a believer in the *mariage de convenance*," said Mr. Schenstein gravely.

Mr. Weinher, whose sense of humor had saved him before now, nodded as gravely.

"Quite," he said.

"Sadie, I take it, is agreeable?" asked Mr. Schenstein, on a thought.

"Oh, yes," answered Mr. Weinher, entirely overlooking the curious fact that Sadie had never been definitely approached on the matter. But that Sadie, so innately agreeable, was agreeable upon this particular point, was the impression he had gained, and he spoke as a matter of course. There was a deep silence. Mr. Weinher thought suddenly

of some one who might not be so agreeable. He reflected. To judge by appearances there was something about that queer, difficult person. At a cursory glance one might realize that she was the type to cherish her own ideas (not that one ever glanced cursorily at Mrs. Schenstein). She wore big, quaint brooches, and seemed to be addicted to creamy lace. Her face was so pale, and her manner so calm, her smiles so quiet. She was deep. Rare. Such a one would have many strange points of view. Such a one always had. Well, thought Mr. Weinher, every one, after all, cannot have his own way, or else where should we be? Where indeed?

"Oh, yes, Sadie's very agreeable," he said. "What about Ivan?" In gloomy silence Mr. Schenstein gazed at the table. What, he thought, indeed? An impulse was within him to speak, to disclose a little of his feelings, divulge something of the true state of affairs. But he could conjure up no statement which would not involve explanation, intricate, unsatisfactory and inevitably extremely mortifying. Yet he could not, once having spoken, leave Mr. Weinher to his own devices. Never, Mr. Schenstein knew, if you are wise, leave any one alone with your own property to make of it what they will, for surely they will twist it beyond recognition. And in any case, what explanation was there to account for the fact that something he himself desired was wellnigh beyond reach of attainment? Slowly and sadly Mr. Schenstein shook his head.

"I must say I have not definitely approached him upon the subject," he said. "But . . ." he paused for a moment, then added strongly, "I have no doubt at all that he will see the advantages of the match and fall in readily with every plan. I know he is very fond of your girl."

Mr. Weinher regarded his cigar a trifle doubtfully. He felt that this certainly must be, and wondered, therefore, why it seemed to him so unlikely. But Mr. Schenstein was speaking again.

"The boy's a bit wild," he observed. "I know that, but perhaps I mustn't blame him altogether. The War unsettled him, I daresay, and it's possible I've been ready enough to give him his head. But he'll be all right. He'll settle down. He's got plenty of time after all. It'll be all right. And they'll make a nice couple."

"Yes?" said Mr. Weinher—and with sudden stern common sense, "but will he marry her?"

There was a few moments' quiet, then, as one on the wings of impulse, Mr. Schenstein suddenly burst out:

"Well, I'll tell you. I can't say. I don't know. I know nothing. But he's guessed what I'm after, and he evades the point, knowing that if I come to it, it'll mean a straight answer. But what he'll do, or why or how or when or where, I don't know. I'm not allowed to. But he talks and laughs and fences and says, 'Won't some other time do?' and then when I get annoyed, off he goes to his mother, with a new funny story about me. It's all sugar to my face, or nearly all, but behind my back . . . oh, I know."

Deeply shocked, poignantly amused and anxious to hear more before Mr. Schenstein recollected himself and what he was saying, Mr. Weinher murmured an unobtrusive "Yes?"

Mr. Schenstein, his eyes, vaguely brooding, fixed upon the table, slowly shook his heavy head.

"It isn't a thing I talk about," he said, "but I don't know. I—don't—know," his voice trailed off into silence. There was a pause, then he looked up. The moment of revelation had passed. Mr. Schenstein remembered himself, and reserve returned. He moved as if to rise, then still seated, said in brighter, more confident tones:

"Well, I only just wanted really to hear what you were thinking of the whole affair. Now I shall have to see. I've not made up my mind yet about one or two things. But one thing's certain: when I've decided that a certain

course is going to be advantageous, when I've fixed my mind upon having anything, I don't think I need tell you I'm as good as there. So you can tell Sadie as soon as you like to start looking forward to the day. There's one thing you may rest assured about: she won't be marrying a pauper. But we must have another chat, later on."

"Yes," said Mr. Weinher, "I know. Well," he said after a minute, "it seems to me you've got the whip-hand. He's got extravagance from somewhere, and he wouldn't relish living on nothing. You can cut his allowance any minute, or if you call it salary, throw him out of the Firm. That ought to do the trick." There was a flippant lightness about Mr. Weinher's estimate of his son's character which Mr. Schenstein found irksome, because above all attitudes it was the one he most resented with regard to himself or his belongings, and also because the very nature of the half-sneer seemed to bring home to him how entirely erroneous the estimate was. His face gathered into austere folds.

"He wouldn't earn much in another Firm," Mr. Weinher went on easily. "I'd give him five out of pure kindness of heart, not a cent more. Can you see my lord living on five pounds a week? Why, he can't live on fifty. And he can have Sadie and anything else he likes. She'll have a little, too. What can he have to say against it?" But the question opened up such a vista of possibilities that Mr. Schenstein was dumb. He dwelt with real horror upon the idea of facing Ivan with an alternative. It would seem that no son of his could be such a fool as to refuse him, but then there was so much of this particular son that was not his, that he did not know. It appeared certain that he must do *this*, but there was always the undeniable risk that he might do *that*. He was no craven, and, Mr. Schenstein reflected, just that very extravagance and careless disregard of money might induce him to accept the alternative and go. If he went, she would undoubtedly

follow; she only stopped for him, and they would not return. She would see to that. She, of the stuff which starves, would keep him at it.

It was a sickening, hateful, dishonorable thought. Mr. Schenstein's loyal, tenacious heart turned at the consideration of it. Mr. Schenstein's deep, secret, lonely self recoiled and writhed at the bare notion of that desertion. Not for her so much, oh, not for her, humiliating as her going would be, he could bear that, but that *he* should go, his son, his very own possession, the thing whom he had loved always, the single, precious thing he had been saving up, with ever-lessening confidence, to be a comfort to him in his old age, pride of his own pride, he upon whom all hopes must ultimately rest, that *he* should go would be as cold and dark and hopeless as the grave. It was so easy for others to talk, to advise glibly these simple little remedies, to say, "Tell him this or that, one or the other"; people did not know, could not be expected to understand for one second what odds were staked upon the chance, what worry gnawed at a tired and disillusioned heart.

"Oh, you know," he answered wearily, "what do they all say? They're all alike. Haven't you ever had trouble with Monty?"

But Mr. Weinher wasn't going to allow this. He shook his head.

"No," he said, "no, I can't say I have. Not to say trouble. No, Monty's a good boy. And he's got his wits about him. He'd think twice before refusing a girl like Sadie, with all the advantages there are too. Especially when he knew I didn't want him to."

His melancholy eyes cast down, Mr. Schenstein shook his head. His tall, independent son, and that long, thin, slippery Montague. Certainly, Montague would do as he was told. He had brought expediency to a fine art. No, Montague never gave trouble. He wouldn't.

But the two were simply not to be compared. Ivan was

a man to be proud of, however greatly one might long to overcome his pride, just as Ivan's mother was a woman to hold up above all other women, however much one strove to keep her down in relation to one's self—but these Weinhers . . . he looked up.

"Yes, of course," he said.

There was a pause, then:

"You know Monty's views of this affair?" asked Mr. Weinher. Mr. Schenstein felt he could guess. He had not the slightest desire to hear them put forth and numbered. He answered shortly:

"Oh, yes."

"Monty thinks it would be an excellent plan," said Mr. Weinher. "He thinks it would be a good thing for Ivan, and for us all. He thinks the family would profit by it. He told me he thought they would be a very happy, congenial pair."

The monotony of Monty's thoughts was wellnigh too much for Mr. Schenstein.

"Ah," he said slowly, and sat there in somber silence, steadily regarding the table. He understood Monty so well, did Mr. Schenstein, and liked him so little. Distrusting him entirely, he naturally conceived a certain respect for any one who could be so clever, so elusive and evasive and quiet. But for Ivan Mr. Schenstein had a respect almost amounting to reverence, rising out of a very different kind of distrust. He did not understand him at all, but he looked up to him, even in the moments of his greatest chagrin, with a queer, pathetic, half-shy glance as something rather unusual, somewhat expensive, important, and difficult to keep. Something infinitely superior.

After a long time he moved and got up. Standing, stretching, eyeing Mr. Weinher down his nose, with a changed and complacent expression, he said:

"Well, we'll leave things for a bit. After all, we can't do any real harm by waiting. They're both young yet.

Ivan will settle down. It'll all keep, and, er—mature in keeping. Ivan *will* settle down."

Mr. Weinher nodded, and slowly rose. "Settle down." Ambiguous, but a good, broad, safe term. It seemed they must leave it, for the present, at that. But if the waiting were to be until that young man "settled down"—it was said at home that he'd settled pretty well as much as he ever intended to already. Still, the future might unfold much. But it was little enough they had managed to-night between them; he would not be able to tell Rachel anything particularly interesting when he returned and she looked at him with a little expectant smile, and said, "Well?"

Only that he didn't think much of the way things were going over there. Poor old Solomon never let anything out, he kept himself to himself as closely as ever, but from one or two hints he had dropped . . . unintentionally . . . Rachel would nod a bit over that.

"Well," he said, "I think you know my views pretty well now. Nothing would make me happier than for our already, I'm sure, united family to be joined still more securely. It's an ideal."

"An aim," said Mr. Schenstein. But he, too, as they went upstairs together, felt that for all the good they had done, he might just as well not have asked this relation of his to come and dine. And the idea that, after coming together to discuss, they could arrive at so little, worried him, undermining what confidence he had had. The thing ought not to be so difficult. And, entering the drawing-room, he took his coffee-cup from Mrs. Schenstein's hands, and sat for quite a long time, staring strangely at her, as if he could not take his eyes from this woman who was responsible for so much of the trouble and mystery, till he remembered that one does not stare at one's wife for many reasons, and began to sip his coffee.

She, pleasantly attentive to Mr. Weinher, even glanced

with easy recognition at Mr. Schenstein, for, having sat waiting for them, crouching fearfully over the fire, following all she knew they were discussing, anticipating miserably their conclusions, in a tremor of doubt and hope and anxiety, she fancied he might perceive her state of mind, and determined that, since it might satisfy him to know she was afraid, he should not know it. Whatever had gone on in the room below had been, she felt sure, as some secret conclave to decide her doom, and whatever the doom, Mr. Schenstein should not see that she dreaded it. The time had gone past for all that. So she talked and smiled and managed Mr. Weinher, as if nothing were more seriously the matter than that she was beautiful and frail, consumed with secret, suppressed passion, and an ennui that weighted her eyelids. And since many are affected in very much this same fashion, her condition was ordinary and average enough to tone quite restfully with the misty gray and the magic blue of the room.

Mr. Weinher, as he emerged from the tube station and hurried off down the hill, reflected, with the curious racial sensitiveness which would seldom permit him to take a taxi, drive a bad bargain, or leave a fellow-creature lacking what it was in his power to give him, on the strangeness of the atmosphere in that house he had just left. Almost unearthly, with its airy beauty and charm, and yet underlying it all, that unhappy lack of assurance, that suggestion of uncongeniality, like a room scrupulously tidied against the advent of some unwelcome, though awe-inspiring guest. Mr. Weinher found no such expression to define what he felt, but, considering his own home, he perceived the comparison. Luxurious, loud, jolly place, wherein every one talked volubly, the lights were brilliant, the rooms well-filled, where the air was often hot with the heat of many disputes. Better, of course, to live like that, heartily, happily, with plenty of noise, than to dwell coolly among the

suave shadows of Berkeley Square. Nicer, far. And yet the house was perfect, and that woman allurement itself.

He turned in at his gate. And when he stood in the brightness of the hall, Mrs. Weinher came out of a door, smiling.

"Well?" she said.

Very interesting is the manner of those who live together in houses. Mrs. Schenstein, Mr. Weinher having gone, wasted no further time in the great room with its dying fire; instead, she gathered up those things which most women, even such as she, bring down with them—a scrap of fine crochet-work, a delicate scissors, her library book, and "Good night," she said to Mr. Schenstein, and slowly left the room.

At the landing window she paused to look up at the dark, blackish blue sky. Moonless, with a few scattered stars, it looked like a great sheet of blue paper pin-pricked, and held against the light. It really did look rather like that, though Mrs. Schenstein, still romantic in her disappointed middle-age, thought it looked far more like a night dark with mystery, its stars reined back and straining, Diana holding them in before the chase for the secrets and subtleties of infinite space. She wished, too, as she had ever since her childhood, that she might have wings to fly and soar above the dark roof-tops, up and away into the vast and distant skies; for to Mrs. Schenstein such exploits seemed the certain way from all that pained and worried her. To disappear for ever behind the darkness, to wander for ever at peace beyond that great curtain . . . wonderful. Mrs. Schenstein sighed deeply, and passed on.

Mr. Schenstein, when he came upstairs, paused at no landing window, for it rarely occurred to him to look out of window unless he happened to want to see anything in the street below.

But he gave a dissatisfied glance at the front door from

the foot of the stairs. By instinct, he felt that the door of his house should be barred and made secure before he himself retired to sleep the sleep of a man within his own house, but his son was out, and could not, he recognized, be locked out. So he must leave the door, feeling, in consequence, unstable and unprotected and vulnerable.

Such an influence has the shot bolt over man, ever a prey to thieves. Mr. Schenstein started upstairs. Ivan generally remembered to see to the door. Ivan was always out. He scarcely saw him—ever.

The hall clock tolled one, as he stood on the second landing. A square place, gloomy and shadowed, surrounded by shut doors, and one of them his wife's. That was like her. If she feared thieves, she made herself safe enough. On a sudden, unusual impulse Mr. Schenstein took the handle, turned it very gently and looked in. He had to peer hard in the dark to find that for which he looked. She lay, dark head over one arm, and the other, slender, long and bare, thrown out across the silken coverlet. Too dark to see properly, yet in the dusky bluish night he could just make out the white line of her nose, and the faint suggestion of pale flesh either side. He stood regarding this, one of his many carefully kept, dearly bought possessions, intently. Thin and pale and flat, a bit faded and not overstrong, nothing very formidable about her, one would think, and yet with those burning, unnatural eyes, those graceful cool lips, she held a whole concentration of energy, a great force of set purpose, an impenetrable defense of passive immovability. Strange that it should be so, that it could be so. A second longer he stood there, staring, his face downcast, brooding, unhappy. Twenty-five years ago if any one had told him this . . . stranger than anything that he, so worldly wise, had not guessed. She breathed very softly. Without knowing what he did, Mr. Schenstein, with a little unconsciously sad movement, leant his head further into the dark, as if he sought something,

wanted something, strove, influenced perhaps by the soft sweetness of the night and its quietness, to gain a sense, however slight and fleeting, of some intimacy. Hardly love, but just to feel her presence for a moment, when she knew nothing and would not stiffen and grow cold—as one touches a flower for the feel of its tiny petal, hardly love. . . .

Mr. Schenstein withdrew, and softly closed the door. Mrs. Schenstein, with head raised on her arm, listened to the soft sound of his receding footsteps. She wished he would not do these things. Feigning slumber under scrutiny was such a strain.

In the cold first hours of the morning, a time when lovers, the sick, and those who are getting rather old, are inclined to lie awake and think, Mr. Schenstein seeing his past as overgrown, deserted country-side, tracked out from among the withered fields his youth, full of purpose, uplifted by one single determination to succeed, one aim to pile up something worth looking back upon, and he thought, "such a different youth from Ivan's, who didn't seem to care a bit so long as the present was good enough." Life at that time had been a steady, solid, satisfying thing, buoyed up on ambition slowly realized, and now Ivan, so far as he could see, had no ambitions, but was nevertheless never satisfied. A long time ago, his youth. A time he had kept to himself and enjoyed in his own way. And later, when youth had passed, that slender, strangely-disturbing creature, that girl, coming to move the heart and stir the senses as a soft wind ruffles the grasses and rustles the leaves.

It had been early Autumn then for him; small wonder, when he thought of it, that she with Spring in her eyes had appealed to him.

Then, as if he were to be crowned with the blessed promise of generations, a son, till now . . . and all at

once it seemed to Mr. Schenstein, watching the paling window-pane, as if a cloak, a protective, concealing cover, that he had assumed in some long-forgotten time, and worn always, slipped treacherously from him, and he beheld a portly old man, with sparse gray hair, disappointed, depressed, doubtful and uneasy, even a little undignified, not a figure of strength, not an imposing, awe-inspiring person, not one to be feared in any way, or one possessing any far-reaching power or influence, not, ah, not the man of his early dreams, not the successful person of his matured ideals, nothing much at all but a little, heavy old man, standing holding Life like a chain that slipped slowly but surely away from his hand, and fell and coiled as a snake in links at his feet, feeling it go, but lacking the power to retain it. Just a poor old man. It was like a dream. Mr. Schenstein shivered. This sort of thing wouldn't do, lying awake, losing valuable sleep, brooding. It was silly. Fool's regretting! What, wondered Mr. Schenstein as he chased a flying shred of sleep, as elusive as thistledown, did Ivan find to think about when he lay awake? Not regrets surely. But perhaps he never lay awake. With the hours he kept, the little time he took for sleeping he probably wanted. Not regrets yet. Though, of course, one never knew . . . the thistledown settled. Sleep.

CHAPTER IV

COUSIN EVELYN ASKS THEM BOTH TO TEA

WITH a feeling that in some way it might be diplomatic to propitiate Mr. Schenstein, if possible, Mrs. Schenstein observed pleasantly one evening:

"I think I must ask Sadie over to tea one day. It's some time since she was here."

Mr. Schenstein looked up quickly.

"Ah, do," he said cordially. "She'll be delighted, I'm sure. When are you going to ask her?"

"I don't know. Some afternoon when I can be fairly certain that no one else is likely to come."

Mr. Schenstein felt this to be but reasonable. He himself never was one to mix relations and friends together.

So Mrs. Schenstein wrote Sadie a nice little letter, beginning, "Dearest Sadie," and ending, "Ever your affectionate Cousin Evelyn," saying how pleased she would be to see her one day when she had a spare hour or so. And she believed she, Sadie, had a friend staying just at present, so needless to say the invitation was extended to her also. A message came back through Mr. Weinher and Mr. Schenstein, from Sadie, to the effect that she would be very pleased indeed, and mentioning various dates upon which she expected to be free. And, it being all arranged, Mrs. Schenstein found herself anticipating the event with a certain interest and pleasure, not akin to her usual feelings pending a visit from any members of the Weinher family. As for Mr. Schenstein, the whole thing so exactly suited his ideas that he forgot to feel particularly surprised. But he did think that, perhaps, on that day, Ivan must

go home early, if he never did so again. It was desirable to throw them both together as much as possible, Mr. Schenstein thought.

It was a wonderful sight to see Sadie, arrayed in satin and jewels, behaving to Mrs. Schenstein in the way she had been taught.

It was marvelous to see Mrs. Schenstein, urged perhaps by a vague intention to do Ivan ample justice, managing to look even a little more charming than usual.

And there was Anne Hurst.

"Mother sent her love, Cousin Evelyn, and said she hoped you were keeping as well as can be expected."

"I'm very well, thank you," Mrs. Schenstein replied. She handed Sadie a cup of tea. "How's her rheumatism?" Sadie stirred it heavily.

"Mother's? Mother hasn't got rheumatism. You're thinking of father. He has rheumatism, sometimes badly. And Monty gets neuritis. But mother doesn't have rheumatism. It's gout, mother has."

"Of course, how stupid of me. I forgot. I must have meant to say gout," said Mrs. Schenstein.

"Oh, it's better now," said Sadie.

"Well, I'm glad of that anyway."

There was a short silence. Sadie still stirred, with the faint aggressiveness of one who has been loyally defending the personal property of her nearest and dearest.

Mrs. Schenstein, her head bent, was aware that the other girl was looking at her. And, she thought, with a regard that contained, surely, something of the interest of a sort of recognition. "As if she's seen me before," reflected Mrs. Schenstein. "Well, she's a nice young creature and clever; perhaps she does know me a little."

It was a pleasant enough face, she decided, after a scrutiny. Pleasant enough for any one to care to look at.

A regular oval broadening suitably over the cheek-bones, with clear pale skin, and large, wide, gray, dark-lashed

eyes. Nice eyes, matching to perfection lips full enough, and firm and warm. It was all strangely, specially attractive, with the assured, unassuming beauty of gentle unspoilt curves. A face from which one might turn, lost in pleased musing.

And her hair, when she looked down, gleamed in wide waves of dark rich gold. Mrs. Schenstein smiled, well-satisfied. Different, Ivan had said. Well, it was cheering indeed if he could see the quality in this girl. Anne. The name suited her.

It seemed rather vulgar even to look at Sadie afterwards, so odious a comparison was wellnigh insupportable, but Mrs. Schenstein turned graciously enough.

"That was a nice dance the other night, Sadie. Ivan told me all about it. I wish I had been able to come."

"It wasn't so bad," said Sadie. "Went off quite well. But after all, I always say, all that's wanted for a dance nowadays is plenty of dancing. Then every one's so busy they don't care about anything else."

"That's so," agreed Mrs. Schenstein. "Times," she added, "have changed." She turned to Anne. "I believe you met my son the other night. He told me there was some one there who had never been before."

"Yes," said Anne.

Sadie brought her gaze up from the floor with a jerk.

"Oh, Ivan! Cousin Evelyn! You know what he is! He and Anne got on awfully well at once. If I'd been Anne, I'd have sent him off, really! There were lots of men simply waiting for a dance, and there was Ivan keeping every one away."

Mrs. Schenstein smiled, and Sadie giggled slightly, in sympathy.

"Well, Ivan is like that, though, isn't he?" She eyed Mrs. Schenstein's face for an instant's sudden doubt, then finished off with her lame, unconvinced laugh. "You know —I mean you know what he is, Cousin Evelyn!"

Cousin Evelyn smiled again, a patient, listening smile.

"Yes," she said, "I'm afraid poor Ivan is a tiny bit inclined to be greedy. He does rather monopolize the best anywhere, I believe."

"Oh, yes," agreed Sadie, happy to be able to cap a remark with an apposite example. Her innocent face beamed. "He's been like that always. Even when he used to come to my parties, he always managed to get the nicest cake." Then panic, ever a sudden tornado with Sadie, swept her, and she subsided, as one struck dumb. Mrs. Schenstein turned to Anne.

"And you're expecting to stay some time in town?" she asked.

"Yes," Anne's tones were soft and even. "Mrs. Weinher has been wonderful. A good Samaritan to me. She invited me to stay just when the invitation was most appropriate. I was so grateful. Yes, and she told me I might be with them for two or three months. It's a long time. So generous of her. My only alternative seemed to be some rather antiquated relations in the North; my father didn't want to take me with him; you can imagine how much rather I would come to Mrs. Weinher. But it seems hardly right to take advantage of such goodness."

The measured well-defined words ceased. Mrs. Schenstein looked at Anne. Anne looked at Mrs. Schenstein. And Anne thought suddenly that she had rather meanly been making some sort of attempt to justify herself, and even, with a flash of insight, introducing herself, as a fellow-stranger in this family. Why she should do either she could not imagine. Sadie laughed, and a crumby plate began a slow descent to the floor.

"As if we weren't simply frightfully keen to have you!" she began.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Cousin Evelyn. How careless of me!"

"It doesn't matter in the least," said Cousin Evelyn, try-

ing hard not to look at the sticky, sugary fragments lying so perilously near Sadie's shifting feet.

"The sort of thing that will happen, now and then," she comforted.

"I'm always doing it myself," said Anne.

Sadie scrubbed the jam off her frock with embarrassed energy.

"It's like me," she remarked. "Spilling things."

It was a sad meal.

Later, they looked at the things which helped to console Mrs. Schenstein for Life. Her embroideries, her lace, her ancient books, china, cameos, her Angelicos and Lippis and Botticellis. She brought them all out, explaining, showing everything, with the interest of knowledge, but without the jealous zest of the collector. Her attitude was that of one, who, happening to see those things which are desirable and worth possessing, and being able to acquire them, naturally does so, even cannot resist doing so. "But I am afraid," she said, "I am not a truly cultured collector. I know comparatively little about age or dynasty or period, but when I go out and happen upon anything which strikes my eye, which happens to please me, I simply buy it. Just because I feel I must have it to look at. I don't really regard that lovely fifteenth-century leather work, nor even the Chinese embroidery, in the light of an acquisition."

It was over an odd little collection of old rosaries, picked up in Italy and France and Spain, that Anne looked up with a sudden curious little smile. "You are lucky," she said.

Mrs. Schenstein looked at her, smiling.

"To be able to have such lovely things," explained Anne. Mrs. Schenstein picked up a string of old, curiously cut amethyst beads, the crucifix of chased silver, worn and thin. She held them against the other's green frock, admiring the effect.

"You're a Catholic?" she said suddenly.

Anne raised her eyes from the rosary, and nodded slowly. "Yes."

Mrs. Schenstein looked at the beads again and then at Anne.

"Well, take them then," she said, and gathered them up into the other's hand. "They're yours." She smiled a small strange smile.

Anne's eyes, staring at her, were almost frightened.

"But . . ." she began.

"No, my dear," Mrs. Schenstein said, "they please me more with you than lying away, unused. They suit you perfectly, and then . . . I guessed. You must have them."

Anne looked down at them.

"They're not mine," she said gently. "They're yours, you know." Mrs. Schenstein stared at her suddenly.

"Why," she said, and then: "But you . . ." and stopped, still staring.

Anne regarded her with grave wonderment. There was a moment's silence, then Mrs. Schenstein came to herself.

"They are yours," she said firmly. "They express your personality, my dear Anne. Come now, thank me nicely, and give me a little real pleasure."

Anne smiled.

"Thank you," she said, "very much indeed. I should love to have them."

Sadie, roaming about the room, came up and looked over casually.

"What is it?" she asked.

Anne showed her. Sadie's eyes, as they rested on the beads, dark, yet alive with little glints and points of purply-red and pure gold, on fire, like rarest wine, grew bright and interested.

"Pretty, aren't they?" she said. "Necklace? Oh, I see, a what-d'-you-call-'em."

"Rosary," said Anne.

"Yes. Oh, but it is pretty"—she extended an eager hand. "Let me have them a minute."

She stood holding them against the light, slipping them slowly through her fingers, her lips faintly parted, her face warm and happy, her expression like that of a mother watching her first child.

Anne was smiling. Mrs. Schenstein smiled too. It was very charming.

"Lovely, aren't they?" Sadie said, and handed the rosary back to Anne. Her eyes dwelt on the tangle of beads lying in the box. "Dad's bought mother two new pictures," she observed. "Awfully pretty ones they are. They'll go beautifully in our drawing-room. Garden scenes, you know; but they're lovely. Mother likes them, but I don't suppose you'd think much of them, Cousin Evelyn. You're so frightfully artistic and all that. Monty thinks they're awful. Now," said Sadie, in her equable way, "that's where I'm different. I don't mind what it is, so long as it's something really nice and pretty. Something you can sort of get hold of, you know. I suppose it's just my bad taste, but then that's the way I am. Monty always tells me I haven't got any soul. He says I'm about as artistic as mother's new pictures. But there it is, I can't help my taste."

"You mustn't take too much notice of anything Monty says, Sadie," Mrs. Schenstein told her kindly. "He will make those sweeping statements just to tease you. He says more than I would, my dear."

"Oh, I don't mind," Sadie began at once. "Not Monty, I mean. Of course not! But there it is." Good-tempered and serene, she moved off again. Anne reflected that it was probable that Mrs. Schenstein only disliked Sadie because she came of a much disliked family, while Sadie, having been reared in an atmosphere of automatic dislike and distrust of Mrs. Schenstein, still liked her, though with a kind of suspicious admiration that must, in Sadie, engender respectful fear.

They wandered downstairs at last, and Mrs. Schenstein stood, cross-armed in the hall, watching, in her peculiar, quiet, half-whimsical way, Sadie, as she talked.

". . . So I told her it was out of the question. I nearly lost my temper before I'd finished. Well, wouldn't you?"

"I would indeed," Mrs. Schenstein said absently, then started and stiffened as there sounded the grating of a key in the lock.

"Now, who's that going to be?" remarked Sadie, who was looking in her mirror.

"My husband, I think," answered Mrs. Schenstein. There was silence while every one waited. Mrs. Schenstein had dropped back again into her former attitude of indolence. Then the door opened, and Mr. Schenstein stood in the outer hall. He saw them, standing, grouped together, waiting for him, and smiled with hospitable pleasure.

"Well, well," he said, and came in. "Here we are, Sadie, I'm glad to see you, after all this long time. And your friend?"

Mrs. Schenstein came forward slightly.

"You're just in time to see them," she said. "I don't think you've met Miss Hurst before."

Mr. Schenstein was delighted to see Miss Hurst.

"But you're not going, are you?" he exclaimed. "You're not going so soon! This is ridiculous! Running away as soon as I come in! Sadie, there's the phone, tell your mother we're keeping you for dinner." He turned almost angrily. "They mustn't go running off like this!"

"Well, we only came to have tea with Cousin Evelyn, Uncle. It's late, we must go," said Sadie, reasoning with him.

"Nonsense, you don't want to go yet. Come along now." Again Mr. Schenstein turned. Mrs. Schenstein obliged with instant concurrence, couched in the warmest terms.

"Of course," said Mr. Schenstein. "This isn't a formal occasion. Don't you be silly."

"Well, they're all going out at home," said Sadie doubtfully. "Anne and I were going out by ourselves probably, but—"

"Now, now"—Mr. Schenstein was genially tenacious. "No buts. That's settled then."

"Well, but—" Sadie began once more.

"That's right. You stop now. Come along, take off your hats. Miss Hurst, you don't mind?"

"Why, of course," began Anne. She caught another eye than his, and banished the first traces of a smile.

"That's right, of course. Well now, come on."

With his coat over one arm, Mr. Schenstein marshaled Sadie along against the still lingering uncertainty in her face, taking Anne in the wake. He looked faintly like a dark old hen.

Mrs. Schenstein, who had stood by, watching with disinterested regard, impersonal, a little amused, cool, was settling matters at the telephone. Mr. Schenstein called halfway upstairs:

"Ivan's not back, is he?"

"Ivan?" Mrs. Schenstein glanced up leisurely. "No."

"Oh," Mr. Schenstein muttered something unintelligible in a voice that trailed off as he went on upstairs.

Considering that he so hated having his dinner disturbed, Mr. Schenstein, over the meal, was superb. He only frowned once or twice, and that to his plate, and that perhaps with ample excuse as the meal progressed and ended without a sign of Ivan.

And Mrs. Schenstein, sitting silent outside the strange series of odd remarks exchanged between Mr. Schenstein and Sadie, glanced from the table to Anne and back again, more than once. With tight lips that quivered almost imperceptibly, and eyes bright with humor, her expression was a combination of appeal and irony. As one who would say:

"One must be patient, you know, cultivate vision, and look at these things with breadth, must one not?"

But of course she said not a word.

When they were gone, Mrs. Schenstein mounted slowly upstairs to the drawing-room.

"This requisite hour," she sighed to herself, fretfully, "that he seems to consider indispensable to the good order and decent convention of our relationship, is intolerable. Why can't I go to bed?"

She crossed to the fire without a word. Mr. Schenstein, recumbent upon a sofa, glanced up.

"They gone?" he inquired.

She nodded. "Yes."

"Hudson out for the third night running," growled Mr. Schenstein. "Why didn't Ivan come home? He knew they were coming."

"Perhaps he didn't want to," Mrs. Schenstein suggested.

"Didn't want to . . . ?" He stared at her furiously. "Well, what do you think . . ." he stopped and settled himself back, muttering.

Mrs. Schenstein stretched out her arms wearily.

"I think nothing, absolutely nothing," she replied. "It's the only way to preserve any peace of mind. Well, anyway," she went on, after a moment, "they're gone."

She went to a table and took a book, then came back and crouched down, in her own special, graceful way, over the fire, till Mr. Schenstein growled that it was the way to get chilblains. She was up immediately. Instant obedience, instantaneous cognizance, was a disconcerting little trick of hers.

"I think," she observed dispassionately, "that if you possessed the slightest discernment, the least artistic perception, you would see how lovely I look against the glow."

But Mr. Schenstein, upon whom these little things had no effect, merely snored offensively, and she regretted the wasted reminder.

CHAPTER V

SCHENSTEIN AND SON

IF there were ever a time when Ivan Schenstein gave proof of any qualities he had inherited from his father, it was when, black-coated and immaculate, he attended to affairs in that august concern, which its various shareholders, according probably to diversity of temperament and of outlook, knew under different terms. Thus, Mr. Schenstein, the owner and person of supreme importance, referred weightedly and with responsibility to "The Firm," whereas his son, irresponsible and devoid of respect, made light of "The Office," whilst Mr. Weinher generally went to "Business," and Montague had wide and far-reaching interests in "Our House."

The Schensteins marketed in various goods. And very successful marketers they were, too, while the Weinhers formed one of those ambiguous, but highly necessary adjuncts, known generally as a "Subsidiary Company," existing, as it did, chiefly to serve Mr. Schenstein when, again and again, he found himself in urgent need of something vague to act as an explanation, or an excuse, or a reason, to help him out of the little unavoidable dilemmas of everyday business life—a sort of escape-valve, in fact. It was the position which the Weinhers had occupied in relation to the Schensteins ever since their connection. It was, indeed, the sort of post which one type of person often does inevitably occupy in relation to another, and, possibly, it accounts for the fact that so many people are just a shade less prosperous, a trifle less successful, a little less imposing, than so many others. It is, perhaps, a system of feudalism, civilized, automatic, and essential to the preservation and carriage of worldly possessions.

Ivan, every morning, was present at and assisted at the opening of the mail. Mr. Schenstein, his perfect cuffs gold-linked, his brows bent with decision, his head shining and smooth with grease, dealt with the letters rather as he played with cards, shuffling, holding a well-selected hand, choosing carefully, with a knowing eye, that which would be of importance and that which would not; an expert, primed with the experience of many a cunning game, and an occasional lost one.

"Wall and Jenner," he said, "that's the Sales Department. But let them have a message over the way that I want them particularly well attended to. I've got an idea they're good. I've heard something. . . ."

"They think we're good," said Ivan. "If they contract with us . . ."

"I shan't be in any hurry"—Mr. Schenstein slit another envelope. "Not a bad firm by all accounts, but I happen to know they've got that fellow who helped to swindle us over the 'Requisite' Company, so I shan't take any risks; if they know him and have him, they're slippery customers."

"Damned fools," suggested Ivan. "He'll walk out on them."

"Probably." Mr. Schenstein took up another letter. "Ah," he looked up. "You remember that sample we had returned. Farren and Prince, if I remember rightly, they didn't care for it. Not up to specification, they said. It wasn't up to much, but we didn't guarantee."

"You tested it yourself," Ivan reminded him, "I saw you."

"I daresay I did," Mr. Schenstein spoke with faint irritation. "I daresay I did . . . I knew what I was doing. Well, here's those same people wanting the same thing. Telephone instructions to have the parcel sent, at another price. I don't think we shall have it back this time. But we must have nothing to do with it. Don't forget. You'll go over to Weinher's and explain. The Firm's the sort,

tell them, who'll think because we ask a big price, the stuff must be worth having. So have it worked out in round figures. But it's to go from Weinher's. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

Beyond some slight amusement at the crudity of this simple little ruse, Ivan thought nothing of it. Deception, in all its manifold forms of lying, swindling, exaggerating, acting, was mere custom and usage to him. He had no scruples; honor, from the standard point of convention, made no appeal to him, and any vague impression he had of hearing of another standpoint interested him about as much as the memory of those long Saturday mornings of his childhood. Queer, depressing sort of customs, relative to that period, and of a merciful unimportance later. He considered business to be purely business, and a sufficient excuse for any dirty trick or shady action that might conceivably further its ends, but he found his father's curious little ways and wiles quite a pleasant diversion from the sameness of the day's work, only feeling that he, himself, could have thought of many others, much more subtle and suitable, though he was forced to admit with amazement that, almost without exception, the quaint, crooked paths Mr. Schenstein took always seemed somehow to lead him to the attainment of his aim. Ivan knew well that deceit, if you are imaginative, inveterate, and unashamed enough, is indubitably an easy and efficacious means to an end. And to him, as to Mr. Schenstein, it was simply unquestionable; you could not, in dealing with so many strange people, get what you wanted, if there were a single course or method closed to you. There were those who classed themselves, with simple-minded pride, under that sublime heading, "Straight." With such it was obviously essential to gain a quick advantage, and be crooked. But there were others, a commoner type, who could see in the dark, and who lived in tunnels underground, and with these one would natu-

rally go down too, and further and deeper, to undermine their foundations. It was all a matter of making a living.

"I see. They'd better have a strong recommendation. Pile it on thick, so that they get hypnotized. I'll write a letter saying the stuff's all that's excellent. It'll act as a species of auto-suggestion, or perhaps Monty could do it better. He loves a good lie."

Mr. Schenstein pressed his bell.

"No, you mustn't do anything in this," he said. "I want the whole thing to be worked from the Subsidiary Company. It's the only way. Yes, certainly a strong recommendation. I don't care what's said, only I'd as soon it wasn't too binding. We don't want to be held to anything afterwards. You'd better go over at once; tell"—he interrupted himself as a clerk entered. "Has Miss Allan come yet? Yes. Let her know I'm ready for her, yes, and she might bring me the file for Mexico, under letter D, with her." He went on, "And tell Weinher that I am doing this because I know the people. Monty can do the letter, here, and take theirs with you."

He turned in his chair, and took up his pen. Ivan left the room to depart on the kind of commission he was engaged in all day long. To pass the word, give instructions, make things properly understood, as one who was absolutely of the Firm, as one to be trusted, yet without the dangerous significance of any real responsibility. Mr. Schenstein issued the orders, Mr. Weinher executed them, Ivan acted as an efficient envoy and go-between. It was a satisfactory arrangement, and as it kept his son in a subtly unpretentious and dependent position, without outwardly attacking his dignity as the son of the head of the Firm, Mr. Schenstein was well content. There was no one less obvious or apparent, to say nothing of crude, than Mr. Schenstein at times.

Mr. Weinher summoned Montague, when he had heard all Ivan had to say. He came in, and he told him.

"A job for you."

"I'm busy," said Montague acidly.

Ivan sat on the edge of the office-table in a negligent attitude, his feet a-swing, his gaze floorwards. He looked up.

"I've got plenty to do," said Montague, with a certain asperity. "Well, what is it all about?"

He listened to Mr. Weinher's explanations.

"And you mean to say you're going to inflict that leaky barrel of bear's-grease on honest men again?" he asked when he had heard all.

"You've got it," said Ivan, "I knew you'd understand."

"It's not very abstruse," Monty, his eyes on the table, replied with his twisted smile, "and you want me to concoct an advertisement?"

"Something telling," said Ivan, "and not too difficult to understand. You know whose idea it is, and I was told to tell you that he doesn't want these dear, good souls to have a handle for future recriminations. The whole thing's got to be devilish cunning, and when I saw that, I immediately suggested you as the master-hand."

Mr. Weinher laughed.

"Monty's got a good head," he said, "he'll see to it, it needn't come over to your side again. Our deal, and the Firm knows nothing about it. I'll be seeing your father a bit later. I'll let him know. It'll be all right."

"I'm sure it will," Ivan said cordially, and slid off the desk. "And now I must be getting back; let's see a rough draft of that advertisement, Monty. I love detective stories, when they're good."

He went out.

Monty turned to the window; he stood there biting his nails, a peculiar expression on his face. There was a long silence in the room, disturbed only by the rustling of Mr. Weinher's papers, as he began the perusal of some document.

At last Mr. Weinher glanced up.

"I thought you said you were busy," he remarked.

Monty looked round. "So I am," he said. He pondered, "I suppose I take the responsibility of making a responsible statement, when I concoct this foolery?"

Mr. Weinher cleared his throat. He had thought as little of the whole idea as Mr. Schenstein or Ivan, but Monty had a way of taking everything in the day's work very seriously, and little commissions of a doubtful nature were of vital interest to him. Mr. Weinher understood something of this. Though, of course, he could not exactly see that Monty, being naturally and studiedly of that unhappy disposition that might almost be termed evil, considered evil, in any form, as a definite proposition. But Mr. Weinher quite saw that Monty would not care to run any possible risk.

"It's not a very important matter," he said, "and besides, don't forget, you're not to say anything definite, and then, who said you were responsible? You've had instructions to draft an explanatory note to accompany some goods. I don't see where you'll hurt." He turned to his work again. Monty stood smiling, his bitter, mirthless smile, then, with the least of shrugs, he turned and crossed to the door.

"I must be getting on. I'm busy," he said, and left the room.

CHAPTER VI

MRS. SCHENSTEIN AND IVAN

AFTER the long, disheartening years, to Mrs. Schenstein, having met Anne Hurst, the mere barest possibility that Ivan might sooner or later think enough of her to wish to marry her, was sufficient to form a hope. And with all the strength and tenacity of despair she clung to it. Unhealthy, neurotic was Mrs. Schenstein, weary and sick with complete disillusionment, numbed with the cold realization of her life's mistake, lonely, becoming daily ever more permeated with that lassitude of the caged creature, worn out with the violence of its own fury, retired at last to a corner, to lie, and feebly stir, bruised with vain beating against the bars, only to start up once more at a sound, and rattle and shake and stare out with renewed passion at the tantalizing freedom of the sky. Thus in a manner was Mrs. Schenstein. Her temperament, essentially large, emotional, intense, craved always just those antidotes to its melancholy that it might never realize. Love, a career great and absorbing enough to become an obsession, religion, God. These, of which she thought and dreamt, could, it seemed, never be hers. Instead, a middle-aged and wealthy gentleman of decided opinions, and the interminable days, uninteresting and uninspiring; clothes, which, however beautiful, can never, after all, be more than mere articles of attire—a magnificent house, which, however wonderful, is, when all is said and done, but a place of residence—holidays, hobbies, and acquaintances, all more or less under the oppressive supervision of Mr.

Schenstein; dull enough—and all through a moment's youthful rebellion against the depressing circumstances of life. . . . Mrs. Schenstein took existence with a graceful and wholly lady-like yawn; she found it all boring, particularly the undeniable fact that, within limits, and according to the point of view of that gentleman of such strong views, her husband, she was and had always been so exceedingly well-treated. Nothing really to complain about save that her whole life, down to the last futile visitor invited to assist in its vacuous gaiety, was utterly removed from every one of her instincts, ideas, and ideals. Mrs. Schenstein found the consolation of the unbalanced in whole-hearted and enduring dislike of Mr. Schenstein. To hate is satisfying, after a fashion. Though at least it may be said in her favor that she was cool-headed enough to see how little he deserved it.

But Mrs. Schenstein had her son, and in him she lived and rejoiced, in him she believed and hoped. Ivan was to make of Life what she had failed to make, to enjoy what she had missed, to have what she had lost, to benefit by her experience, and to be the salvation of herself. Ivan, whom, despite the formidable obstacles of Mr. Schenstein's distrust and jealousy, she had just managed to keep a little to herself.

A difficult matter involving the exertion of her influence at odd times, and, when opportunity occurred, of endeavoring to show and prove to him that it was well to cultivate a fastidious and artistic taste . . . of setting the example. Of saying, "Ivan dear, one must be good, yes, courageous, of course, industrious, cultured, but above all and at all times one must be graceful, remember that." And so she had managed to make an impression upon an impressionable creature. And he loved her. It was a most blessed thing, that love. A triumph, too, when he might, perhaps, so easily not have loved her. A triumph, and an endless cause of suffering.

The War when he had been "courageous, of course." But what a worry that had been; and then . . . other separations. A cultured outlook gave Ivan his own holidays, though Mrs. Schenstein, looking back, wondered if she had laid sufficient stress upon that "good, yes," but Ivan would make some attempt to reassure her, laughing, "But, dearest Mum, at least I am esthetic, oh, absolutely, I give you my word!" She never learnt more, and soon discovered that to know one's offspring is at least esthetic is small consolation, or even to know that he is being graceful in Sicily or Cyprus is little material comfort. "The fault of his upbringing," she would tell herself mournfully; "between the two of us, he has never been brought up at all."

And now Mr. Schenstein, apparently, had ideas which were rapidly rising to the surface. Mr. Schenstein cared nothing for Sicily or Cyprus: what he cared about was that Ivan should settle down into the family; that principle, position and possessions should run not the slightest risk of being diminished or lost. Ivan would inherit one day, would own quite a lot, and naturally, he, Mr. Schenstein, wanted to know that what he must leave would be left in good hands.

Mrs. Schenstein saw it all clearly, and dreaded it all with horror. Ivan and Sadie Weinher! She could foresee the inevitable deterioration, the mean, detestable, hopeless life that would come. Her mistakes all over again, only this time never to be rectified. And Ivan would become rich and prosper, and settle down, and the little that was in him of herself would be crushed. Her son would become one with them all, practically indistinguishable from Mr. Schenstein and Mr. Weinher, even from Montague, from all the men she had met again and again in her visits to Hampstead and Golder's Green and Maida Vale. Mrs. Schenstein positively writhed at the thought. No wonder, then, that she fastened upon the idea of Anne Hurst. Soft-voiced, gray-eyed and fair. A Christian. If only Ivan

might see as she saw, might see the whole difference between the plans of the family and that girl. If only he could know how greatly she, his mother, wanted it. If he might but perceive the salvation that must lie in such a one as she. If only he were fastidious, esthetic, graceful enough to fall in love. For herself, Mrs. Schenstein knew she would not mind anything then. Once know that Ivan was safe . . . and she could finish her life in peace. So, considering these things, Mrs. Schenstein felt the need, imperative within her, to know something definite upon the matter, to hear from him that Sadie, at any rate, was out of the question. For, she said within herself in her impassioned way, "If he marries Sadie Weinher I feel I shall go mad." "But," she decided, "he cannot—only," she wavered again, "if he is led to imagine that to do so and thus be amenable, is the only way to ensure the peaceful plenty he has been reared to expect? He relies as easily upon an uncertain future as I once did—could that make him so sell his soul?" She spoke to him over the telephone, asking to be given lunch, if he were not already engaged.

Ivan said he was not, and would love to oblige. "But I'm not tearing you away from anything, or being tedious in any way, you're sure, Ivan?" Mrs. Schenstein asked.

Ivan was quite as gallant to her as he was to any one, even over the phone, and replied that that was impossible.

It was towards the conclusion of the soup that Mrs. Schenstein broached her subject:

"Ivan dear," she began, "may I ask what is going to happen about this terrible affair of Sadie Weinher? I don't want to seem too inquisitive, but I daily anticipate a terrific onslaught from your father concerning this darling project of his heart, and I should like to know what reply to make. Already, you know, he's often said things. It's been the idea for years, hasn't it?"

"Has it?" said Ivan, "how silly."

"Yes, I know. But—well, you'll be called upon to

make some definite answer shortly. What do you propose to say?"

"Nothing," said Ivan.

Mrs. Schenstein eyed him doubtfully.

"I don't think that'll do," she said.

"It'll have to," Ivan pushed his plate aside.

Mrs. Schenstein was silent, crumbling her bread.

"No, but seriously, dear," she said at last.

Ivan smiled.

"Seriously, dear, I shall endeavor to reply with the greatest possible ambiguity, by silence."

Again Mrs. Schenstein said nothing, looking into space with wide troubled eyes, then she looked at him suddenly.

"You'd never do it, Ivan?" she asked.

"No," said Ivan briefly.

"I know you wouldn't, Ivan?" she pressed anxiously.

"My dear Mum, what is the matter? Surely you give me credit for somewhat finer sensibilities, a trifle more esthetic morality than to commit that kind of indecency."

He regarded her in his pleasant, untroubled way.

"Well, I think it's rather strange," Mrs. Schenstein said after a time. "I feel sure Sadie doesn't really care a great deal for you, despite the way you have doubtless been thrown at her. . . ."

"Good God!" Ivan interrupted in tones of horror. "What a horrible idea!"

Mrs. Schenstein still eyed him very seriously.

"You know what it is," she said. "I do. It's just that your father and hers are working steadily for the complete union of the families. Not because they are particularly fond of each other—far from it. But through, I suppose, some kind of instinct, a feeling between tribes, and then because he sees what a fearful mistake he made (your father) when he married me. He thinks that I'm the irritant, the uncomfortable, outside influence, for ever trying to bring some alien element into the family, or perhaps

take something out of it that's wanted, I don't know . . . and so he feels that he must get you safe from the ravages of my being your mother. It's something like that."

"Is that what he really thinks?" asked Ivan. "How very peculiar. Well, it may be so, but I should have thought it was I he thought was such a mistake, not so much you. He thinks he can cope with you all right (I don't know why, I'm sure, but he will think these things), but it's I who constitute all the terrible trouble surely. I wish to goodness," said Ivan easily, "I wish to goodness he'd see plain common sense, and treat me as I've a right to be treated. What I want is a decent allowance, not all these generous gifts, to do as I like with without all this fuss. But he won't." He stopped. "What will you have now? A little salmon?"

Mrs. Schenstein nodded. She waited until the order was given, then said:

"No, that's just it, you see, Ivan. That's exactly what you'll never get out of him, and besides," she added after a moment, "that wouldn't make things any better. You have an allowance already really. No," Mrs. Schenstein said, looking at him with grave emphasis, "no, Ivan, while you are dependent upon your father in any way you cannot help doing, to a certain extent, what he says. And you'll always be pestered and badgered to do more. What you need is something greater. You need freedom. But," and she paused and her voice dropped a little, "you'll never find that, while you're mixed up with the family. It's impossible. Because their conception of the term is different from yours. They're free enough, Ivan, in being a Schenstein or a Weinher, but that's not enough for you." There was silence.

Ivan, struck serious at last, waited, playing a little with his knife, leaning forward, his eyes on the table. Then he said:

"Freedom. Yes, I know." But he stopped abruptly.

Mrs. Schenstein went on:

"While you are with the Firm, you will never be free from Sadie. That I know."

Ivan looked up.

"Sadie? Well, that won't go farther . . ."

Mrs. Schenstein said nothing. For a moment Ivan was caught in his thoughts, gazing down. Then he burst out:

"But it's positively ridiculous, Mum. Good Lord, nearly every man I know seems to be in the family concern in one way or another, but their people wouldn't dream of thinking it gave them the right to interfere with their own affairs. I mean to say, good Lord, what's my being with the Firm or not got to do with marrying any one? It's unique."

Mrs. Schenstein regarded him, half smiling.

"Unique," she said, "perhaps it is a little. But then you see, Ivan, the whole thing is rather unique. The affair of myself and your father is unusual really. And can't you see that that is the whole point? That it's all on account of me? Your father and the others can't bear to think that you may prefer me to them. They know you're bound to have taken after me a good deal. You're certain to have some of my ideas about things. That's unavoidable. But they, or at any rate, he is so afraid that you may be led into—oh, I don't know what—the things that spell for him catastrophe. Your father wants you badly, desperately badly, for himself. You know how I mean. As an heir, a successor, a promise of endless good fortune. Of course he does, it's an instinct with him. Every one has it in some degree, he has it in a high degree. And then when he thinks that he may never see you, in a way, secure, that he may have to die without knowing that you have assumed his position, well, he simply cannot bear it. He wants you to marry a Jewish girl, and since Sadie happens to be at hand, and is moreover already in the family, and since also she really does appear to constitute his ideal of womanhood,

well, the thing becomes an obsession with him. It's quite easy to understand, Ivan, when one thinks. Given first a man of your father's stamp, high-principled, hard-working —yes, dear, high-principled, undoubtedly—tenacious and old-fashioned. Very orthodox, really, underneath, and remember that, after being very careful indeed for a large part of his life, and not taking any risks about anything, much less marrying and founding a family, he suddenly comes across some one whom he likes and marries because he thought that—well, you know, that it will be all right. Then he sees that that sort of thing is never all right, and that the son he wanted so much shows signs of becoming the very antithesis of what he had intended him to be—a ruin instead of a blessing to the family. Well, can't you imagine how that man, stubborn and enduring, tries his hardest to rescue his tottering ambitions? If your father had risked a large sum upon anything, and it looked like being lost, you know, Ivan, as well as I do, he'd raise every stone, never rest, while there was the least possible hope. And probably, through sheer invincible purposes, he wouldn't lose it. Well, he means you to do what he conceives to be right and essential. He wants you to get the idea of the family, to feel as he feels about the vital importance of keeping carefully accumulated wealth safely in. He wants you to marry Sadie."

Mrs. Schenstein paused, took a little of her fish, then continued:

"And then, dear, you must remember another thing. And I feel that this is really the most important of all. Religion. Not so much as a matter of creed and belief. That's not religion to him. No, religion as something racial, in-bred. It isn't that he'd care if you married some one who didn't profess it from the spiritual point of view. Of course not. He doesn't mind that you no longer hold it sacred. I'm not quite certain, but I believe he's eaten ham himself. But what he realizes, and is afraid of, is

the severing of nationality, of tradition, of caste. He took the risk once, relying upon his own strength, thinking his son must, without question, be his son entirely; he sees that mistake, you're only half a Jew, and now if you care nothing for the family, if you were to marry a Christian girl, or if, indeed, you were never to marry at all, everything would be at an end. All the possessions, and the pride, crumble away into nothing. What a downfall!"

Again Mrs. Schenstein stopped, and Ivan looked at her without moving, held as one listening to a true and enthralling tale, then once more she resumed, smiling, "Don't think I'm too violently imaginative, Ivan. But you see I've watched for years. It has taken all that time for me to understand. If I'd known at the beginning, do you suppose I should have married? But I didn't. I never guessed. I thought it was all just a comparatively easy matter of creed, and I found that was nothing in comparison. And then it was too late, because although I might have left for myself, I could not leave you." She paused, and busied herself for a few moments with her plate. Ivan, who had touched nothing since she had begun to speak, still stared in a trance. Then Mrs. Schenstein looked up and smiled and went on again: "Dear Ivan, I don't think you can possibly realize what marrying and having children in the wrong family can mean. It makes such a hopeless muddle. Every one generally is unhappy and cheated, and no one ever can get out. For you see the children part, at any rate, makes it so that one doesn't even want to. Ivan, your father wants you to have Sadie, I've tried to explain why; if you cared for her, if she were that type of person whom I thought you could ever like, if I were persuading you against your inclination, I would, truly I would, keep silent; but I know that can't be so . . . and I say, if you see things in any way as I do, then don't give in."

"I shan't," said Ivan, waking up suddenly.

She smiled.

"No, I know you won't."

They both finished and were having coffee before Mrs. Schenstein returned to her subject.

"The thing," she said, "about me is, Ivan, that being your mother, I always have to be in some sort reckoned with and kept down, in case, you know, I manage to work mischief. I am your mother, but you are his son. That, I think, is the one insurmountable difference between us. He hates me because you are like me. If only, he thinks, you would in some way side with him. That's all he wants. I know it. I have always known it. In a way, it's really just jealousy. Just that I'm different. I don't think or hope or want or live as your father does, and you may be as I am. Can you wonder that he is worried? He'd be far fonder of me, Ivan, if he were more sure of you. You know all this, dear, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," Ivan said. "I suppose so. But still I can't make it out. I'm sure you're perfectly right . . . but it seems so absurdly different to most people. I don't know much about any one else. I never think in terms of families, but it seems so—well, so ancient and Biblical, and hopelessly far-fetched!"

Mrs. Schenstein smiled.

"Yes, dear. But then you forget. Biblical, you said. Well, the Old Testament is your father's family history. Yours too."

Ivan spoke after a few moments.

"Oh, well," he assented, "I suppose so, in a way. But personally, I think you're too kind to dear papa. I don't believe it's so much a matter of race and instinct and all the rest as just his obstinacy and narrow-mindedness. He's in love with Sadie himself. That's what it is. That often happens with this kind of thing. He's suffering from a weird form of admiration for Sadie, and since through various reasons it's out of the question for himself, he gets

a kind of perversion and settles on her for me. Father's bound to be a bit of a beast, you know, or he couldn't have got on as he has. That stands to reason."

Mrs. Schenstein laughed.

"Listen, Ivan. This may rather surprise you, coming from me, but it's the truth. Your father isn't a beast at all. Far from it. Jews, as Jews, rarely are. They're only different."

"Even Monty?" asked Ivan, more in genuine curiosity than in flippancy.

"In a way, yes, even Monty. Though I think he is the result of the grafting on of some nationality or other. Or possibly he is one of those inevitable exceptions. But your father is a perfectly good and kind-hearted man. Yes, really. But he possesses certain absolutely immovable, unchangeable ideas. The things you are born with that you don't get rid of, Ivan. He's amazingly moral. Think, think, Ivan, just how moral he is! He's as capable of a generous, charitable, broad-minded action as most people are, more so than many. He . . ."

"He knows how to put a deal through," interpolated Ivan. "And he doesn't let mere trifling scruples interfere, either!"

"Yes, but that is because he has a different standard of scruples, Ivan."

"Ah," said Ivan, "perhaps."

"Yes, dear. But I was going to say, generations of persecution have brought out natural pride in its most virulent form. Two thousand years of Christianity have made him hate it. Dearest, he *does* want you to marry Sadie!"

Ivan looked at her with merry, smiling eyes.

"But aren't you a Christian, then, Mum?"

Mrs. Schenstein gazed down sideways at her cup, the while she stirred it gently, then:

"Oh, well," she said meditatively, "in a sort of way, you know—at least I'm not a Jewess."

Ivan eyed her with a certain understanding.

Over her cigarette, Mrs. Schenstein had one more comment.

"He doesn't," she said, reverting to the commencement of their conversation, "look upon you as the mistake, dear. Never imagine that. You may worry and puzzle and annoy him, but you are always his son. No, it is I—I, he can't do with."

Ivan regarded his mother as she spoke. Seeing her face behind the wreathing smoke, her eyes—their restless fire dull now—earnest, sad, dreamy eyes, her gentle drooping mouth, the hand that supported her chin, thin and white with its delicate tracery of veins, and he said slowly:

"I don't know. I'm quite certain that he loves you. Not with any kind of affection, but rather with the unwilling, inevitable appreciation of what he married you for."

Mrs. Schenstein stared, thinking for a time, then she nodded.

"I don't know. It may be so. I can't say. But I—cannot endure him."

Ivan said nothing. He knew it well. Had grown up with the knowledge. But he looked again at her eyes, marking their curious shades and depths, and thinking that they seemed lost and wild and aimless, like two strayed creatures, grazing in strange pastures alone.

For a long time they sat without speaking, each busy at a loom of reflections. Then, when Mrs. Schenstein broke the silence her voice was in a lighter key.

"Forgive my boring you so, Ivan. But I get carried away. I forget that you can't follow me, I'm sorry."

"Sorry!" exclaimed Ivan. "For goodness' sake don't beg my pardon! I'm glad you've spoken. All I have to say is that nothing on earth would induce me to have that girl. I don't know a lot, but I've seen enough of what that bargain has been to you ever to take on anything of

the kind for myself . . . And besides . . ." he stopped abruptly, "I shall never do it. I shall get out of it somehow. After all it ought to be fairly easy; I mean I can't very well be *pushed* up to the place of execution and slaughtered. And then, Sadie isn't surely madly enthusiastic about the idea. I mean, she can't possibly be keen on me and that outsider Auguste Gerthold as well—not both at once at any rate. The two things don't go together!"

Mrs. Schenstein smiled.

"As far as I know she hasn't even been approached upon the subject. But that's nothing. Poor Sadie, in her love for her parents, and her constitutional inclination to make everything all round as easy and simple as possible, would do anything. She's absolutely tractable at heart. But she's very easily flattered. Most people are, you know, and perhaps Sadie, being simple, is rather more easily than many. She might quite possibly become intrigued with the idea of being your wife, if only it were presented to her in a sufficiently attractive light, and, my dear, let me assure you of this. If she did once begin to think she loved you—worse, that she had a right to your love—you wouldn't know her when she found she couldn't have it. She's absolutely primitive, just really the unhappy result of a primitive type, worked upon and rendered misshapen by civilization. She likes bright colors and pretty things, she's loving and good-hearted, easily pleased—but, believe me, she's got a temper, and you'd find yourself faced with another fairly formidable complication if ever that were roused!"

Ivan laughed.

"Dear me! That's interesting! So it's like that, is it? There's the devil there too, then. It seems I'm beset on all sides. But I shan't worry, and you mustn't either, love. I'll find some way, in my own way. But I don't intend to be cast off with a shilling, or anything dramatic like

that. I don't see why I should be. But if father is laboring under the delusion that he lives in . . . well, when did fathers choose their sons' wives?"

"Never, dear!" answered Mrs. Schenstein promptly. "But now and then they've wanted to!"

"Poor father! He's a sort of Moses really, leading all his Israelites about, and when he goes up the mountain, he comes down to find them, that is me, going to the devil, worshiping false gods and idols of gold. I call it pathetic!"

"Idols of gold," murmured Mrs. Schenstein, then she laughed. "Biblical metaphors, Ivan, we're rapidly becoming maudlin! And besides, I'm keeping you from the pursuit of your calling." She rose, and began to gather her furs.

"Yes," said Ivan, standing up also. "You are. When I happened to mention to father, quite casually, that I was giving you lunch, he said frostily, 'Don't be too late back.' And now I shall be late back. Never mind; perhaps if I'm late enough, it'll hardly be worth going back at all. What do you think?"

"I think you ought to go back, and work very hard to make up," she said, smiling. "Suppose you had no work. Quite a number of people, I believe, haven't."

"Ex-service bands, no-dole brigades," said Ivan. "Ah, you may see me selling matches in Piccadilly yet. Me, a martyr to my sense of beauty. Marriage or martyrdom, and I prefer the latter. A noble cause! What would you do?" he added curiously.

"That," Mrs. Schenstein replied, "won't come."

"No, I know it won't. But suppose I did go away. What then?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I'm afraid it's rather too late for much to happen as far as I'm concerned. I expect I should stop much as I am, really, you know. After all, there's no other place for me; even if you cared to have me, you couldn't."

"You'd just stay at home with father?"

Mrs. Schenstein looked at him, a faint smile in her eyes.

"Just stay at home with father," she agreed. "Yes, that's it."

"A taxi?" he suggested as they stood outside in the street. "Why didn't you have the car?"

"No, my dear. I'm going to walk. It's been so nice to see you and talk. I only hope I haven't said too much. Old women so often seem to be garrulous."

Ivan laughed. "Don't they?" he said, then looked down at her, suddenly serious. "But you do trust me, don't you?"

"Absolutely." She touched him gently and moved away.

"Good-by, dearest."

"No, but really," he began.

"Absolutely," she said again, and looked at him.

"My dear, is that your new coat? How nice it looks. You go now first. I want to see the effect from the back. Good-by."

She watched him away, then turned and started off by herself. And she felt a strange sense of loneliness steal over her. A solitary feeling such as she, particularly, was little fitted to cope with.

It made her walk slowly, a familiar, dead feeling, and she knew from whence it rose. The realization that no one, absolutely no one at all, understood exactly her position and how she felt. That Ivan, no matter what she could say, would never be able to see the meaning, vital, imperative, of her words. She stood alone, as she had once elected to stand. She had chosen, and this loneliness was but the natural result of that choice. There was that to be lost of which he had no knowledge, that to be gained of which he had no comprehension, and upon him, solely, though he did not know it, the stakes lay. She was by herself, and yet it was only fair.

But it was none the less hard to bear, as the cold, dark days of age drew nearer.

CHAPTER VII

MRS. SCHENSTEIN AND ANNE

IT was as she came up through Park Lane to the corner that she met Anne Hurst, walking down Oxford Street, a slight figure in green.

"I saw you as you turned the corner," Anne said, smiling. "If you hadn't seen me—I shouldn't have come up to you. I think it is so annoying never to be able to take a walk without being beset by people you know; you mightn't have wanted to meet any one."

"I quite agree," Mrs. Schenstein said gravely. "Except that I am really glad to meet you; but you're perfectly right; acquaintanceship, even friendship, is not necessarily an excuse for casual recognition. For instance, I have many dear friends within doors, whom I could not endure to speak to in the street, but"—she took the girl's arm—"will you walk a little way?"

They went on.

"Unless you are in a hurry," added Mrs. Schenstein. "I'm not myself."

"I've been spending an aimless and practically fruitless, though exceedingly expensive morning, shopping," said Anne. "Then I took a solitary lunch, and you saw me meandering along, vaguely returning home again."

"And where's Sadie?" asked Mrs. Schenstein.

"She had to go out to lunch, so I took the opportunity to come out by myself."

"And is that what you like doing?"

"Sometimes," said Anne.

"I've been lunching with Ivan, my dear," Mrs. Schenstein added. "Do tell me—I've longed to know—do you

like being where you are; you know what I mean," she explained.

A faint smile slanted Anne's lips; she turned to Mrs. Schenstein, looking at her seriously.

"They are awfully kind," she answered, "and the very spirit of hospitality. Sadie and I are friends."

"I see," said Mrs. Schenstein. "I couldn't have put it better myself."

Anne laughed.

"Oh, I don't know," she said.

They were passing along under the high walls by the Park, and, so near the other, Mrs. Schenstein began to feel an odd, and almost imperceptible sensation of some strange force, whether in herself or her companion she hardly knew, only that something like a little current was with them; something impended, was straining to materialize, was quivering, like a desire, between them; for she was sensitive, and often troubled by the wavering threads of human communion. She was aware that Anne, by her side, had stolen one, or possibly two, little glances at her face, and particularly at her eyes, and she felt, with a thrill, that it might all become suddenly tangible, in a sign, a word, a request, and they had come to one of the tall houses. Then:

"I was coming down not altogether vaguely," said Anne. "I had intended going in here for a minute. I like this place—have you heard of it?" She eyed Mrs. Schenstein in ordinary interrogation, "The Perpetual Adoration"?

Mrs. Schenstein had a moment to notice how insensibly they had diminished their pace; she stopped. "Perpetual Adoration," she echoed. "No," her pulses leaped suddenly, and her glance broke. She looked, slowly, first at the inscription over the portico, that was akin to all the other porticoes, then on to Anne. "Perpetual Adoration," she murmured again, and stopped.

"I didn't know whether you knew anything about it,"

Anne said levelly. "It's rather interesting; many, other than Catholics, think a lot of the idea."

She saw with pity the peculiar hunted expression that had come into Mrs. Schenstein's eyes, but she waited.

Mrs. Schenstein glanced up the steps. "I'm afraid I'm very ignorant," she murmured. "I seem to recall having just heard of it. Shall we go up?"

Anne followed her, considering why she had taken so much for granted, why she had troubled at all, feeling that she understood what was the matter, and the part that was hers to play, wondering what tremulous emotion shook that strange hidden mind, and slowly realizing something of her participation in some kind of precipitation of events, but what it was all about, she could not decide. . . .

And in that silent little room, they knelt together.

Quiet and soft and gentle, with delicate spotless things about, and two white figures bowed, like pale slaves before a throne, and sunlight, faint and wandering, the last remote stance of a dream, and flowers in thin sheaves, wavering candle-flames, the murmur of sound as the droning of a bee on a warm window, the chinks and rustles and whispers of a hush, and somewhere, anywhere, everywhere, Something superseding, wondrous, brooding, hovering, a Presence, a Personality, the sense of a Being . . . Love . . . God . . .

Like the swathe of a veil, a drooping rest settled over Mrs. Schenstein's eyelids, so that she bowed her head, as if, weary from regrets and sorrow, worn out with the unending pain, she would sleep.

They said not a word, as together they walked down by the grass-land and the Row, all gold with the sun. Anne was quiet with happiness, lifting her face to the breath of a wind, inclining it to the warm intimacy of the ground, happy. . . .

And Mrs. Schenstein, slowly she sauntered, her eyes

turned and staring, her expression soft and broken, without energy, beaten, her lips moving with recurring, unhappy thoughts.

At last she turned and spoke, and out of her voice the drag and the purr of concealment was gone, so that it was hollow, like a reverberation.

"How did you know about me?"

"I didn't know anything," Anne said gently.

"But you guessed?"

"I think I must have begun to understand, a little." She paused. Mrs. Schenstein was silent. "You don't mind, you're not offended?"

The other shook her head. "No, you'll have to know. You're"—stopped—"you're the one."

"You don't understand that," she said after a minute. "But think a minute. We are of the same Faith, you and I. Remember that, and that I have left it, so utterly and so long, have so deserted it all my life, that it's empty and shapeless with disuse. Consider you're young and of no folly, no agony of shame, and how I am so different, and have lived bitterly in impatience; in your patience, from your placid youth, think that I have come to that place where nothing I know of is of any avail, that I need you, that you have been waiting, just the one of all who may see and realize. Bear in mind my life and see that you are here, as perhaps, you were to be from the beginning, you who think you must have begun to understand."

Anne's eyes were clear with sorrow, and she turned to Mrs. Schenstein, as if borne on a wave of feeling.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she breathed. "I'm so very sorry."

Mrs. Schenstein's lips twisted in a slight smile.

"To understand and to be sorry, both, what a heart to have, what a lucky heart."

They were coming down the last of the road, under the trees to the water. Anne watched the gleam of the spreading wavelets, and suddenly in relationship to a queer,

poignant train of reflection, she thought, "a lucky heart!" And she wondered away gently to herself, as she waited.

"I came pretty well at once when I heard what you wanted, didn't I?" Mrs. Schenstein asked. "I knew, you know. I felt it coming. When we stopped, I knew . . . I went up there. Do you know," she said, "it was the first time for twenty-six years that I've seen the Blessed Sacrament exposed. Can you guess how I felt?"

"How did you feel?" said Anne suddenly.

Mrs. Schenstein bowed her head.

"As I have not felt since I last saw It," she answered, "in Heaven."

Anne looked away. A feeling of tears had come to her, it was all so very sad.

"A long time," Mrs. Schenstein began meditatively. "Time enough to forget the dearest or the dreadest memories, you would think, but some things never go, their recollection never wanes, rather it waxes, grows more full and real and enduring, as its hopelessness gets more. When I left . . . it all, I never thought it would all come with me. It didn't seem so very important all those years ago, and yet it only took the sound of the words you said to me by that house, only the look and the scent and the stillness, only the Thing Itself, to bring out everything I tried once to kill. You see, my dear, it's no use; fear and love and longing never die."

A silence, then she began again.

"I've lived a strange existence, of course. How could it be otherwise? People, the people I know, think I'm queer, impersonal, peculiar; they don't know—how should *they*—what a burden I bear, what a weight drags me down and ever downwards into the dark. My husband"—she stopped and looked at Anne—"I forget you don't know. You are nothing of a stranger to me, it seems natural to refer to things you cannot possibly understand. But—you have lived in the family, I think you'll know what I mean

when I say that I have suffered in more than one way. My son"—another pause, and another little glance at Anne —"my son has been my greatest happiness, and at once my terrible grief and woe."

Anne listened, her eyes fixed on a boat that just lifted and dropped with the wind, a little brown thing down there in the open water. She looked at it with a small, strange thrill within her, as if she saw something important, symbolical, bearing on the theme, and yet she was intent with interest.

"You see," came that tired voice, "when you do as I did, make the marriage I made, there is absolutely every single thing to be taken into consideration. For besides that I lost my religion for myself, I forfeited it also for my son. I sowed the seeds of generations of apostasy, I—oh, I've done so much, beyond telling. He's a dear boy, but he's nothing. He's not a Jew; that was tried for, I know, but failed; but he neither knows nor cares anything about his rightful religion. He'll never be a Catholic, and just because he's my son, it seems."

Anne took her arm as they stood on the curb. "Mind," she said gently, for a great car was coming on them swinging around the corner. Mrs. Schenstein waited, insensible, still speaking, wandering as it were, through a maze of retrospect, remorse, retailing.

"And you see the thing that they all want to do is to get him secured into the family, married up with one of themselves, done-for." She looked at Anne.

"Of course, he says he understands and won't have it, but I don't know. I trust him, but there's more than him in it. And if my son marries a Jewess, well, it's all my own fault. The whole time, it's that, no one to blame but myself, no folly but my own, no wrong but mine, and me to see and bear the eternal retribution. The things you are entirely responsible for are so terrible, so lonely."

There was a long silence, then Mrs. Schenstein turned.

"My dear," she said, "forgive me. I oughtn't to have gone into that place. Such places are not for me. I should have known."

"That was through me," said Anne. "I wanted you to, I wanted to try and help you; it was interfering and perhaps foolish of me, but I felt, I've always felt ever since I saw you, that there was something quite wrong, and as you say, something, possibly, that I can do. But"—she paused—"don't say that. It's for you specially such places are."

Mrs. Schenstein shook her head. "For some, perhaps, but not me. Because for me there is nothing to be done."

"Why?" asked Anne.

"It's difficult to explain," Mrs. Schenstein eyed the ground they walked on with wet eyes. "But I've got into such a tangle I could never really extricate myself."

"Couldn't God?" asked Anne.

Mrs. Schenstein smiled.

"I'm afraid not, dear. There is so much besides myself in it all. There's Ivan. Until he's perfectly safe from all I fear, how could I go away, because I should have to. You see, Anne, he wouldn't follow, he'd merely think I was being very sensible to do just as I liked for once, that it was a pleasant whim, and good for me. If he thought even that. But it would bear no meaning for him, and at present there is more than enough to keep him at home, and besides, there exists a very natural, though to me a strange and awful tie, between him and his father. He is, underneath, rather fond of him, he'd miss him."

She looked at Anne, with a whimsical expression in her eyes.

"It is a tangle, isn't it?"

Anne nodded dumbly, her head suddenly full of a medley of notions, and now she could see, somewhere, a point to the whole strange drawn-out conversation, something real and definite, yet, behind all the wreathing strands of

the tangle, the knots and broken ends, the confusion, it seemed so lost and far away, and as she returned Mrs. Schenstein's glance, she could not decide whether or no she was the only one to whom it had occurred, that little idea, which might become an aim, a solution—so very easily.

"I won't talk any more, my dear," said Mrs. Schenstein suddenly. "You've been very patient, listening to all this weary account of a miserable woman's troubles and misdeeds. After all, it's an ordinary story, a mistaken marriage—religion relinquished on the spur of the moment, and all the inevitable consequences; there are many such cases. I never do say all this, but I went into that place, and then there is something wonderful about you; you are, for me, what I said, the person." She laughed, with forced mirth. "How boring for you! How will you get out of it?"

"I'm honored," Anne said quietly. "I take those kind of things always very seriously. It's my nature; perhaps I carry it to the verge of priggishness, but—but it gives me almost a real ache when I hear of trouble and suffering and hopelessness—worst of all that, Mrs. Schenstein," she broke off, and finished. "I'll pray."

"That's right, my dear." Mrs. Schenstein's voice had resumed most of its accustomed tones. "You pray. And perhaps, you never know, something may happen yet, perhaps a lot will. It's beginning to get dark—hadn't we better turn back?"

Nearing Hyde Park Corner, she said suddenly:

"Take my example to heart, you dear child; don't, for pity of me make the same mistake yourself. It's not worth it. If ever"—and she looked at Anne straightly—"if ever you should meet any one not of your religion—no, if ever you should meet a Jew whose face or whose possessions attract you, go away, at once; he'll tell you how fond he is, how he'll do anything, except actually make any definite

promises; he'll say how much he loves you in your faith, he'll say anything as any man who wants you will with all the sincerity in the world, or not, as the case may be, but he will say it; then, for God's sake, don't give in; remember how it will be afterwards, and, for one reason or another, there is never any escape, so mind."

She was silent, then she turned again, and now she looked at Anne softly, appealing. "But, my dear, may I say just this more: If ever you should meet a Jew, who would benefit all the world, all Heaven, by your love, if he wants you and more than you, if you could be his only accessible path to God, if he's alone and in need, then, if you have it in your heart to love him, indeed it would be a wondrous thing to do so."

"Good-by, my dear," she said a minute later. "Come and see me soon."

CHAPTER VIII

A PLEASANT THING TO BE IN LOVE

NEVER was dear, warm spring-time so sweet to Ivan Schenstein as during those days of a few meetings, a little talk, friendship with Anne Hurst. The charm, subtle and irresistible, of clandestineness is renowned. To bear within one the thought of knowing some one rather more than people guess; the tang of adventure about meetings that are a little difficult to arrange; the slipping off and rushing away to keep those rare trysts; the delicious agony that some mischance may have occurred and one's eagerness is in vain; the race to be in time. Ivan learnt, if he had never known before, the lure of secrecy.

To him there lay such a poignant appeal in that they loved each other in so shy and quiet a way, like some pale flower twining and straggling over a wall, unseen, half-hidden by more ostentatious blossoms. To him there seemed so much delicate humor in that when he went to see her it was for all the world as if he paid a visit to Sadie Weinher.

And all around schemes and plans still grew apace, and false hopes flourished and his father was becoming gratified and good-tempered that he was being so sensible and might yet be fond of Sadie. And Mrs. Schenstein, silently watching, waiting, never breathing a word, smiled contentedly to herself, as she felt something of her anxiety begin to fade. If it were to be like this, she need not have worried. With loving interest she entered into the wonder that must hold him captive, the magic of gray and gold and paleness, and sympathized wholeheartedly with the kind of fastidious, sane appreciation of the superb, the love of

beauty, that quickening, lively passion, that intoxicates but never dulls the senses, that is fine. And she thought of Anne, in her green dress, and wondered as to what she thought of it all, and what she said to Ivan, and further how she looked at him. . . .

In the meantime she had perforce to listen to Mr. Schenstein's hints and threats and intimations, all that Ivan would have termed the "loose nuts and bolts and screws in the complicated machinery of his mighty mind." The little things he did not feel it quite expedient to make his son the recipient of, the small reasons and shades of reasoning which dripped like oil from that powerful engine at odd times, in odd places, at dinner, and after, everywhere and always, so that it seemed to Mrs. Schenstein that the very chairs prickled with constant mention of Sadie Weinher, and there was no stemming the flow.

"I was talking to old Weinher only yesterday—nice girl Sadie—every one likes her—it's high time we settled something. What's Ivan up to? You haven't said anything yet? It's the best thing that could happen."

Or:

"I think I shall tell him straight out that the time's ripe for some settlement, and that if he won't see reason he must try and shift for himself. He can take it or leave it."

"I would," Mrs. Schenstein had been caustic. "But do you think it's very wise? I fancy Ivan would not be quite so easily intimidated as you appear to think. He's perfectly able to make money. He's got that from you. Suppose he took his alternative and went. You would feel rather annoyed if he did go and were quite successful."

"And I suppose you'd go with him."

"I don't know."

Mr. Schenstein's laugh was mirthless.

"You'd make a pretty pair."

And another time there was this:

"She's not a beauty by any means."

"Who? Sadie?"

"Sadie! No! that girl."

"There seem to be so many."

"I was only thinking," Mr. Schenstein's voice had trailed off, then returned, "it's just possible. Ivan's such a rattle-head, he may be playing the fool with that Hurst girl. I'd believe anything."

"Oh, no." Mrs. Schenstein had made a sarcastic return to her book. And then at last one night came definitely, that he wished Ivan to consider seriously the proposition of marriage with Sadie. That upon his decision hung his future, that he might know this, as an aid towards deciding, and that she might say what she would as soon as she liked. She seemed to exert a good deal of influence over him on the quiet. She must lend a hand.

"Speak to him! Speak to him!" Mrs. Schenstein cried out suddenly. "What do you mean? What can I say? What is there to say?"

"I leave that to you." Mr. Schenstein regarded the ceiling through clouds of smoke.

Mrs. Schenstein was quiet again. She looked up, raising her eyes with that peculiar expression of insolent indolence, of which only a very quiet person is capable.

"I may as well tell you what I think you must already know—that I am not by any means in favor of pressing Ivan upon such a subject." She paused, then continued in her slow gentle tones:

"He is perfectly capable of managing his own affairs himself, being, I think, fundamentally independent."

"Yes, I think he's that," observed Mr. Schenstein sarcastically. "He certainly never comes to me for anything!"

"Whose fault's that, pray?"

Mr. Schenstein said nothing.

"And in any case," Mrs. Schenstein went on coolly, "what would you have?"

She waited, but he only lay and stared up at the ceiling and would not speak.

"Ivan," Mrs. Schenstein continued, "will never, naturally, be able to see upon what grounds you demand his compliance with your wishes. And mere advice with a given object, I'm sure he would resent. . . . Try and remember whether you would have been coaxed and cajoled into anything at all, much less marriage, at his age. Why do you expect Ivan to be so unnatural?"

Mr. Schenstein had not been listening.

"I had no idea," he said, "that when the time came there would be any difficulty. I know nothing about his likes and dislikes. He can have what he likes, do what he likes, that's his own affair, and nothing, so far as I can see, to do with marriage. But according to the principles and point-of-view of his heritage and environment I consider it's highly unnatural if he can't be sufficiently accommodating to fall in with some very excellent schemes, and marry a girl whose nationality, class, position, and—er—prospects correspond with his own."

"*Mariage de convenance,*" murmured Mrs. Schenstein.

"If you like, and in my opinion, the sanest, most practical form of union, from the standpoint of a civil contract, and moreover for the endurance and stability of . . ." Mr. Schenstein searched for a word, "of an indissoluble vow."

Mrs. Schenstein bit her lip.

"Then you don't believe in divorce?" she queried irrelevantly. "Not for Ivan, I suppose. But I take it you make some provision for the inevitable boredom that would certainly, in Ivan's case at any rate, ensue from so well-planned and virtuous a match. You would, perhaps, permit him doubtful recreation from ambiguous sources."

"I haven't considered the question of what I might permit. I don't suppose I should be there to permit anything," Mr. Schenstein answered wearily. "I can't expect

to live for ever, that's precisely why I want to see my home and money and family secure before I die. I haven't built up a stately edifice of prosperity and prestige to be content to leave it unprotected, to fall into decay."

The deep sense of drama, which runs like the vein of gold in quartz through a whole race, always strengthened in Mr. Schenstein when, becoming impressed with the vital importance of anything concerning himself, he was moved to eloquence. There was poetry now in his face, beauty in the strange mourning of his tones. He was touched, and genius leaped up, a thin flame and agile, and shone in his eyes. Mrs. Schenstein eyed him curiously, understanding, moved. But her hatred was so deep and enduring that not even sympathy could for one instant banish it, rather it rose up in her heart, rebellious against such an appeal.

"Well, I should ask him definitely," she said. "You haven't done so yet."

"I've been waiting," said Mr. Schenstein with his own supreme dignity, "but I shan't wait much longer. I shall tell him straight out what's in my mind, what I wish, and that I feel my wish ought to serve as sufficient reminder of his dependence upon me. He can't afford to leave me wishing for long."

Mrs. Schenstein sewed on in silence, dwelling calmly amidst her reflections, aware of the suspicious old eyes that watched her so furtively, that regarded the half-circle of her inclined face, and the moving of her fingers, with worry and anger, as if they held queer, intimate, secret things, the nature of which he could not divine.

Then Mr. Schenstein took up a fresh cigar. One of those cigars he was given to regard a moment before he began on them with such a lack of enthusiasm and disfavor. Not worth smoking, weak, invalid's fare. All through getting old.

"Well, I want you to do something," he remarked, and lit it and drew the first breath.

"I really cannot see that there is anything to be done," Mrs. Schenstein held a needle to the light, intent upon its threading. "If you leave things"—she drew the silk through the eye with that meticulous care which the power in the eye of a needle compels in every one, even the most careless—"if you leave things, I have no doubt they will all come right. Ivan goes a good deal to the Weinhers' considering, and there's no one there, really, but Sadie. For of course there's no question about Anne."

Mr. Schenstein made no reply. He stared in preoccupation at a green glass, pale, pellucid, wavering up like a wet sedge-rush, with desolate eyes, and a face barren in its dissatisfaction. Mrs. Schenstein, undisturbed and discreet, applied herself to her work. Thus they sat, two beings each as separate and removed and withdrawn from one another as if they had never come together under a fallacy of love and respect. Without regard, ease or understanding, lonely, their ideals and emotions clinging, gray wraiths with pinioned wings, to aims and ambitions, like unto the ledges crumbling above such chasms as turned their souls pale with horror, each in their different way.

Then Mr. Schenstein spoke again.

"I admit I never feel sure of him," he began slowly, "but I cannot think the boy would ever be such a fool as to marry any one . . . a Christian."

"No, indeed." Mrs. Schenstein still bent over her needle. "I should think he might profit there by a working example in his own home-life. That ought to be more than enough to show him how little such a thing pays."

There was a lowering silence, then like a little storm on a close day, Mr. Schenstein relieved his overburdened mind of something of that which oppressed it so heavily.

"Of course I know it's not the slightest use speaking to you. I daresay you've got any number of fine plans concerning any number of important things. I don't doubt it for a moment. And they would naturally be certain to

be the absolute opposite of anything I might have in mind. You are scarcely likely to have much interest in the family. Why should you have? I don't suppose you'd care what silly, idotic thing Ivan did in the name of folly. You would, I know, far rather he married the girl in the nearest tea-shop, or not marry at all, than have Sadie. Any one would do for you, who'd come in and bring confusion and trouble with her. Your Ivan who always puts you first! I know! But I tell you this in case you don't know it even yet—Ivan's in my Firm, and he's my son, and while he lives on my money, he'll have to live in my way. I have my ambitions—oh, not the sort that would appeal to you, but still, that doesn't make them any less important to me. I may be old-fashioned, but for the same reason that I wanted a son, so I want Ivan to have one. I believe in family life, and the carrying on of a good name, also, I'm proud to be a Jew, and my son has got to live after me, to continue where I must leave off. Now do you see why I'm so anxious to have him married to Sadie?"

"Well," said Mrs. Schenstein, the faintest turn of a smile at her mouth, "I'm sure it all sounds exceedingly worthy. The only question is, does Ivan hold your opinions? I mean, you know," she went on, with an air of grave reminder, "perhaps he *doesn't* believe in family life, perhaps he DOESN'T hold it so vitally important to perpetuate a name; perhaps even if he did he wouldn't consider the name in question worth the trouble and expense of perpetuating. It is even conceivably possible that he doesn't want a son. He might prefer a daughter. And as," added Mrs. Schenstein, in a manner so indescribably irritating, that Mr. Schenstein's unwillingly attentive eyes positively glowed, "for your very excellent racial pride, well, there you know, it would not be so very astonishing if Ivan were to show some deficiency, for if race has anything to do with it, he might as well be proud of his Christian lineage. And then," she finished, still tranquilly sewing, "it is just

possible that poor Ivan doesn't want to live after you, he might prefer merely to live, you know, unhampered by the demands of descendancy. You never know."

"No," agreed Mr. Schenstein, "I know very little. If I hadn't been quite so ignorant some years ago, I might not have to look back upon those years with so much regret. If I'd known how to estimate your quietness and softness and meek and mild ways, and your pride and obstinacy and ingratitude, I might have thought better of marrying you. I couldn't make myself out at the time, only I thought it must be all right. I didn't think enough. I was too certain. Well, I've found out now. But Ivan hasn't. He can't have yet. With you to egg him on he might do anything. I want to save him from himself and from you."

"I hope he repays you with interest," Mrs. Schenstein vaunted mockingly.

Mr. Schenstein brooded a moment, then:

"I might have known," he finished, "you could leave your own religion so easily when I said, 'Look here, here's everything you're wanting, money and clothes and all the rest.' Your unfaithfulness to that might have shown me you weren't to be trusted."

There was silence. Very carefully Mrs. Schenstein folded up her work. Caught on the needle, her finger left a spot of blood on the embroidery, but she hardly felt it. With bright, bright eyes, and lips drawn tight like a thread across her face, she rose and left the room.

Mr. Schenstein, regarding her movements from the corner of one eye, grunted ironically. And he thought to himself:

"Now we shall have wounded dignity and haughty silence for a week." And he reflected on what he had said. It was so true; you simply couldn't trust those funny willowy creatures with the swimmy eyes, couldn't be sure of them, they weren't even sure of themselves.

And meanwhile Ivan, blissfully unconcerned, met his

Anne, and thought about her, and was glad and pleased, not with the idea of any ultimate issue to his love, not with any aims for the future, but just that he had met her, who was so lovable, and that they were in love. For he knew how to love, did Ivan, and since to find and fancy something beautiful and pleasing to the senses, was the most enchanting adventure of his life, he was not chary of loving. It was her charm that had grown and still grew upon him. Some subtle, indefinite attractiveness, like gray velvet all soft and softly folded, like a dark old mirror, like the sudden heart-lifting sway-down in a Chopin waltz, or the wide-eyed sorrowful surmise Botticelli found in the Madonna, like a faint shape of grace and sweetness, like anything that touches loving and impressionable creatures, so that they cannot take their eyes away.

They had found themselves strangely during the passing of the months. With never a sign, never a word of love, never a glimpse of passion, they whiled away odd hours, and stolen moments, dwelling upon each other in shy glances and little shreds of silence, and they talked together till Anne understood well enough the bitter unhappy thing that was his mother's life, and too—though this Ivan hardly thought to convey—the wretched, uncouth, disillusioned fiasco that was his father's. She found out the shades and subtleties, simplicities and crudities, and depths of a temperament compounded of two such opposite characters. She heard what he thought of life, "One must keep something for oneself out of the wreckage. You'll lose, or give up, or give away practically everything you started out with, however much you don't want to, but so long as you've got something, even if it only amounts to a memory, I expect it's not so lonely later on. And the only way to have anything of the sort worth having is to do exactly what you like now and then. I'm very egoistical, I suppose." And then she found out, through some unwitting disclosure of his, that he knew nothing of

his mother's secret, and what, besides all, she carried in her heart. It was very interesting.

And Ivan, hearing Anne, realized more and more the kind of quiet and restful spirit that was hers. He began to see that she must possess some confidence, some assured peace, that armed her against hurt or disturbance. She was not cold, or hard, or disinterested, only her detachment kept the world at a respectful distance. She wanted things and loved things, and perhaps mourned things, but somewhere within herself there lay, warm and secret and unmoved, her very being, a pure thing, secure—her soul. It amazed Ivan. Never before, it seemed to him, in all the eyes he had looked into, had he found such an irresistible attraction as in these gray, dark-fringed eyes. Never till now felt and understood the delight of lips warm and deeply pink, closing so gently and smiling so sweetly, and moving a little now and then, as she thought. And her cheeks whitened towards the ears, to ivory, so that they were like a revelation. She was as a pearl, without a cold glint in her, soft, with a light and a gray shadow, and a gleam for ever half-vanished, and a glow at its heart. And for her Ivan sacrificed himself to such complete self-annihilation that only to see and be with her he went often and often and talked to Sadie, and even took out Sadie, that Anne might come too. A pleasant thing to be in love!

Then one day this happened that quickened and precipitated all Ivan's intentions. They were at tennis with the Weinhers and their friends at some house. There were balls to be found in a shrubbery behind the lawn. Most of the people had given up the hunt, but Ivan and Anne still wandered in a desultory way among the tangle of weeds and stems, stirring them occasionally in vain search.

"Completely gone," Ivan said at last. "For God's sake, let's go and get some tea or something. It's no good looking any more."

Anne looked up to Ivan standing in the white glare of

the sunlight. It came to her to say then what she had to tell him, when there was no time or place for questions and fears.

"I shall be going home," she said, "quite soon, now, Ivan. I heard from my father this morning. I've stayed longer than I thought as it is." She turned: "Are you coming now?"

Ivan looked at her.

"Going home already?"

"I've got to."

Ivan took out a handkerchief and wiped his face, eyeing her all the time in consternation.

Then he began to expostulate.

"But you can't go home yet, Anne. It's out of the question. Impossible. You're not going home yet?"

"I must," Anne said again.

A moment's silence, then Ivan, still staring at her, said:

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I didn't know till this morning."

"Oh, but it's ridiculous. Won't the Weinhers have you any more?"

"I don't know. But that isn't it, Ivan. I shall have to go, and in any case I couldn't have stopped on and on like this any longer. Do you realize I've been here nearly four months?"

"Lord, no. I thought you came last week. When do you go?"

"Not to-morrow, but very soon. Two or three days. When I get a wire. Friday, I daresay."

"Friday," repeated Ivan. "But that's ghastly! Three days!"

Anne smiled. "I'm sorry, Ivan. But you didn't think I was stopping for ever, did you? I'm sorry," she said again.

Ivan looked at her.

"Sorry," he said, "I should think you are! Do you realize you're going away from me?"

Anne laughed. "Yes, that's why I'm sorry."

A short silence, then:

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Ivan asked.

Anne shrugged.

For a second more he looked down at her, at the soft rise and fall of her breast as she breathed, then he moved.

"Oh, well, that's that. But look here, you'll have to give me all there is left. I'll phone you to-morrow."

"All right." Anne turned. He caught her arm.

"We must go out. Can't waste three days."

Anne laughed a little.

"I know, but there are the Weinhers. I mustn't on any account be rude, you know."

"As if that matters," Ivan said sweepingly. "What a point of view! No, well, I'll phone you early."

"I'll see you again," said Anne.

Then they went to join the others.

Ivan thought it all over that night, and by morning his mind was made up. One certainty he had to work upon, that some way, somehow or other, he must have Anne. Until the moment behind the tennis-lawn, when she had said, "I've got to go home," he had been perfectly content just to remain in a blissful state of knowing and loving her, with, vague enough in the future, some idea of marriage. Then, suddenly, it had come to him, the realization that she was going away, leaving him, fading out of his life, that she might be carried off to any remote place, that, conceivably, he might never see her again, and that there had not been one word to remember of love, one promise to ensure against severance, and that he had the shortest time in which to rectify this, or to secure her for himself. And, too, he had known with a peculiar pang of understanding, seeing her there near him, with all the heavy, sticky, green stuff clinging round her, and

her hair damp and curling over her hot forehead, that he loved her so much that even the mere thought of her going was as the most terrible loss in the world, that he wanted her, not with the regardless, self-interested, unthinking passion of mere passing desire, but rather with that deep enduring ecstasy that stirs the soul to self-effacement, that longs to bring contentment to the loved one, that is gentle and gracious and delicate for fear of giving offense. Love so real and true, that it is akin to pain, that banished will pine, and scorned will never die. That breeds a longing unlike all desire, and unrequited, settles in the heart, and bears it down with the agony of its own presence. To be in love!

And Ivan thought, "If she cares at all, she will, she must care enough for anything." And it seemed certain that he could tell his father that Anne was not a Christian, that she would not mind marriage in a synagogue, that she was easy and accommodating, and of no definite ideas, if to do so would make their love an easier, less troubled thing. And then she was so lovely and winning that his father, after the first anger of disappointment, could not be very obdurate and hard. If he knew anything at all he must realize that his son had a right to his own standard of beauty, his own ideas of love, and he would become, under Anne's influence, speedily reconciled to her presence. And it would all be all right. Anne, of course, should do exactly as she pleased, without the least question. Would he, her lover, have her otherwise than grave, and filled with those charming, gentle thoughts about God, and the Saints and all the rest of it? . . . But all reasons and reasoning give way before love, and Anne, if she did but care enough, could not cling to the trifling obstacle of mere faith. And they would be unbelievably happy and there would be no more talk about Sadie, and his mother would be so pleased.

By this time, with his mother's idealistic grip of an am-

bition, Ivan could not perceive a single flaw in his schemes —indeed, inordinately vain as he was, it did not even occur to him that Anne might refuse his proposal. He knew himself to be eligible, he had found out long ago that he was desirable, and the idea that he was so deeply in love as to offer marriage seemed to him conclusive. He did want to marry Anne. Any other alternative in her case would have horrified him by its utter unsuitability and impossibility, but he could not help feeling that for a man of his type to want to marry any one, showed an unselfish spirit and beauty of feeling, which must be irresistible to a girl of pure and true affections.

And besides all, just one little trait, inherent in him from generations, gave him this attitude towards the woman he wanted. Almost subconsciously, Ivan felt that there was something very splendid and powerful about him, that he had a will which must be done whatever happened. Sitting up in the dark, staring thoughtfully over the bed-rail into a great future, there was perhaps in his mien a suggestion of subtle dominion, as some Eastern potentate might lean forward on his arm, and watch the dancing, well pleased, and mark the grace and pallor of the slave-girls and be satisfied.

Thus carefully considering, Ivan controlled ardor with practical reasoning. For, possessing fire, he kept it, after the manner of his kind, not as a ravaging tyrant, rather as a commodity.

He rang up Anne before she had had time to go out.

"Fancy you, Ivan," came a voice in a sort of wild clack over the line, and then, "Anne, did you say? Oh, do you want her?"

"Yes, it's I," Ivan answered. "Funny, isn't it? Yes, will you ask her to come for a minute? Thanks so much."

He heard something resembling a laugh, and waited. Then he began to glance about impatiently. "That fool, Sadie . . ."

Then Anne's voice.

"Hullo!" he began. "I say, I want to ask you something. Say yes beforehand, for goodness' sake!"

"What is it?"

"Oh, well, it's this. Will you come out to-day? Eh? Oh, anywhere you like. Wimbledon, Brighton, Australia, I don't care. Only come, will you?"

"I—" began the tiny voice.

"Look here," said Ivan, "I've just got half a minute before about seventy-four silly, idiotic creatures come rambling in, simply dying to hear me on the phone in an unofficial capacity. You'll have to make it short, and you've got to come."

"But, Ivan, I don't mind, only . . . I don't see how I can. I don't know what they're all doing to-day; they might—Ivan, you really are . . ."

"Oh, heavens! I say, Anne, it's a matter of life or death. I got a sort of feeling just now, if you don't be quick and say 'All right,' I may die."

"Why is it so imperative?"

"I can't explain, but it's vitally important. Anne, you might! Why not? Anne, do come!"

He waited then.

"All right, Ivan, you . . . I think you'd better meet me somewhere near here. Belsize Park Station."

"Rather. Ripping. Then we'll go on the heath. At 2.30. I'll be there. Good-by for about four hours then. What?"

"Can I bring Sadie?"

"Good God! you're joking!"

There came the ripple of a laugh.

"I won't. Good-by."

Ivan crashed the receiver into place, feeling that to all intents and purposes the thing was accomplished. True, he hadn't actually asked her yet. But she must have guessed what he was after, and then . . . on the heath on

a lovely afternoon, she simply wouldn't be able to say no. When she was going home so soon, and everything.

He sat down to his work again, and with a price-list before him, began to consider her, in that funny little black hat that seemed to bring out all the stimulation of her beauty, and the greenish coat. He looked up. A middle-aged clerk had entered and was waiting patiently. Ivan stared at him with unseeing eyes. "What is it?" he asked.

And the middle-aged clerk, who could have done twice his work, and that infinitely more satisfactorily, said:

"If you'd just see to this, Mr. Ivan."

CHAPTER IX

THE PROPOSAL OF A SCHENSTEIN

"YOU see"—Ivan was looking at her eyes—"you see the whole point is, Anne, that I can't possibly do without you. I want to marry you, then I shall feel I've got you for ever. Do you think you can marry me, Anne?"

Anne's eyes roamed out over the Hampstead Uplands, enchanted with happiness. Her heart, her soul, her spirit seemed almost faint with lightness. As if she were some lovely, misty, golden intangibility, some web of air, merging into the shimmery veils of sunlight, some new-blown bubble floating free. She was in love. But she could not speak, dare not, was tongue-tied, spell-bound under the magic of the sweet bright day, and the voice at her side. Ivan went on, content as yet without an answer.

"It would be so splendid, Anne, you know. It's just love, you know, really. Nothing else counts for anything. We could live perfectly; Anne, it's the only life for me. Surely you feel the same. You are so absolutely beautiful, you're the very meaning of beauty. Ever since the moment I first saw you, I've thought so, Anne. That evening I had meant to be so bored, and then afterwards I wanted it to go on for ever. I loved you even then. And when I came again, it was really just to make sure you were alive, and not an imaginary thing of night. You seemed more like a dream, like the spirit of desire. But you were there, and infatuation sent me perfectly mad. I waited for you up the road and when you said you'd come out with me, I could have sung going along. And then

I loved you more and more every day. It was divine just to know you, and then suddenly you said you were going away. I could have sworn the whole earth had reeled and fallen through space. And there wasn't a second to say anything that mattered. It seemed absolutely absurd to go up and start having tea with all that silly crowd after that! And now, Anne, I know there's only one thing to do—you simply can't go away and leave me. You must marry me if you love me at all. Do you love me at all, Anne?"

He stopped and waited. Anne looked up, and bowed her head.

"Go on," she said.

He eyed her for a moment.

"Well, that's all then, isn't it, Anne? There's nothing more to say. It's so beautiful, don't let's think of anything now except loving each other." He took her arm and her other hand.

Anne looked up and her head seemed to swim. Nothing mattered. There was no reason or question, nothing to know save that she was loved, wanted so much, by this being at her side, who looked down on her with such earnest, eager eyes, he whom she had thought of with a thrill almost of fear, aghast at the intensity of her feelings about him. She had paled with the hope of hearing that he loved her, sickened with the fear that she might have to go without hearing a word. And now it had all come to pass, and he had told her. There were a hundred, hundred, horrible, cruel things she ought to say, dreadful reasons clamoring to be recognized, but since he had spoken, there was nothing, no word, but that she loved him, loved him. Loved so much that only to look at him was a pleasure as piercing as pain.

"Why, yes," she said, "I love you. I can't tell you how much."

There are moments when all beauty becomes one.

When the absolute peace of realized longing, in its rare moment, is entire with all bliss. And a face and lips and eyelids close at last are one joy with all the boundless ecstasy of grass and distance and wide, cloud-flecked sky. Ivan and Anne, superb in their absorption, stood reared up together on a hill-top, unconscious and unashamed.

For once incongruous humanity in a natural beauty seemed, amidst natural surroundings, not out of place. Not a rabbit, not a bird, passing would have feared them, instead might have settled happily by. With warm, flushed cheeks, they drew apart at last, and stared at one another.

"I could feel your eyelashes flicker, Anne," Ivan said.

Anne smiled faintly. Then, holding her and her hands, he told her what they would do.

And Anne, listening, began to see. . . .

For he said that first she must know that he loved her above and beyond everything, that there was nothing, oh, absolutely nothing he would not do for her, that he wanted more than anything else in the world to marry her, that, indeed, in the true sense of the term, he could not live without her. Then: *But* he knew he must explain everything to her straight away, that she might come to a proper understanding of how things stood and—well, it was like this, he lived with two people about as diametrically opposite as any two people can be, so that it came about that while his mother would be delighted to know that he loved a Christian girl, his father had already so many ideas of his own, concerning his son, that even supposing he could be brought to any sort of reconciliation with the idea of her, Anne, as a daughter-in-law, his preconceived plans, would, or at any rate, might, stand in the way. But there were ways of managing things that would facilitate matters considerably.

Not too much must be said at first concerning their own ideas about things, and then if the definiteness of Anne's religious convictions need not be too greatly emphasized,

if they could, together, display to the old man a fairly ready cognizance with his views, even as a last resource to going through the service in a synagogue, merely, of course, to appease the obstinate prejudices of age, then, aided by that most important influence of all, Anne's own personality and charm, such tactics might produce effect in the right direction. It was nothing, really; they neither of them, in their different ways, were tied down to narrow principles or anything like that, but it was so essential to get married and that speedily, that nothing, surely, on their part, should stand in the way. And Ivan knew Anne would see why he was so anxious to consider his father's objections. Being in his Firm, and in a sense dependent upon him, he had to be careful. Of course, when he said "dependent," well, Ivan did not mean that he was not in the long run as much his own master as any one else, but since he did know that if he tried relying entirely upon his own efforts and abilities for maintenance it would amount to very little, he had to look at the thing sensibly and be more or less diplomatic.

And besides, he would not dream of asking anything so gentle and delicate as Anne to come and help him live on the income he'd have if he struck out on his own. That was how it was, then. A fearful nuisance, but Ivan supposed there was always something in life to prevent it being perfect. But in any case it didn't much matter, because Anne hadn't got to do anything really that would be against her convictions. He would simply tell his father that he meant to marry a girl of his own choice, but that they wanted to be as pleasant as possible over it, and then, with any luck, it would certainly be all right. And Anne knew how much his mother would like him to have her.

"They wanted me to marry Sadie," he finished up with eloquent eyes. "Not mother, of course, but all the rest of them. I dare say you got to know about it. It was entirely ridiculous, and nothing on earth would have per-

suaded me to do it; but I never realized how absolutely grotesque it was until I met you." Then he stopped, and there was silence. Anne walked on, with set face and eyes staring. This swift change in all that had seemed smooth, this sudden transformation from the comfort and contentment of her happiness, to the cold, dreary realization of happiness lost, was almost too much for her. Listening, her brain took in the meaning of Ivan's explanations in all their significance, but her heart felt dead, crushed with the blow. It was awful. The peculiar, unthinking, persuasive voice, the complete disregard of her point of view, the hopeless impossibility of the whole thing seemed to Anne to envelop her like a wet, icy sheet, and the reasons which had clamored at the very first when he had spoken, started again, knocking louder, more insistent than ever at the door of her frightened mind. The uselessness, the mockery, the futility, the folly, the unlovely prevarication, they were bold, and would be answered. A host of reasons came to drag her from her easy hiding-place. Still, she went on, thinking, trying to hold against them, then without looking up, she said in low tones:

"Tell me again exactly what you mean you would want."

Ivan stared at her.

"Why," he cried, "you don't mind, Anne," and stopped, and stared again, and went on, "you know what I mean. It's nothing. Nothing whatever. Darling, precious Anne, it's only that he's such an extraordinary person. Simply a mass of prejudice. It's to please him."

"To please him," she said, and looked up, and then suddenly down again.

Ivan eyed her with ever-increasing dismay.

"Well, you must know what I mean by that. Don't you see that if we do more or less what he'd like in little things, there probably won't be so much trouble." He waited.

But she was silent, her eyes bent on the ground.

"Anne!" Ivan's tones were almost indignant. "What is the matter?"

She turned then, and her eyes and her voice were as if, dying with him at her side, she must say good-by.

"I can't, Ivan. Indeed, I can't. You must see it's impossible."

Ivan stared, without a word, then:

"Impossible," he echoed blankly. "Why?"

But Anne could only shake her head, looking at him hopelessly.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said. "Why is it impossible?"

Again Anne shook her head.

Already Ivan was impatient.

"Oh, good heavens," he began, "surely you . . ." and then seeing her bowed head and the weary disappointment in its drooping, his voice changed.

"My dear, dear Anne. Do you mean that what I said now was impossible?"

"It's because you don't understand," she said.

"How do you mean, don't understand?"

She looked up suddenly, quickly.

"Because you *don't* understand," she repeated passionately. She stopped a moment, then went on, "You said about trying to please him in little things. That means being married in a synagogue, means keeping what I am, a Catholic, as far as possible in the background, means hiding all the truth from him, and living a stupid, horrible existence, full of equivocations, means the ruin of everything. Do you call that a little?"

"I call it pure exaggeration, Anne," Ivan said. "That's not what I said at all."

"But it's what it would mean."

"Rot."

"No, Ivan," Anne said, much more gently than before.

"Don't you see that how we began in a thing like religion and marriage so should we go on. What we told your father at the beginning, is what he'd always have to know. It would never be any easier to tell him I was a Catholic and you meant to let me lead a Catholic life in a few years than at first. On the contrary it would be much more difficult."

"But why need he ever know more?" asked Ivan.

A half-smile crossed Anne's lips.

"Oh, Ivan, do think! All sorts of things would happen. To a certain extent he'd be sure to expect us to lead a Jewish sort of life. And then," she stopped, and looked at him, "your father wants all his descendants to go on being Jews. And that, of course, would be utterly impossible."

"Why?"

"Ivan! Children, of course. All Catholics may only marry any one not of their religion on the understanding that their children are brought up Catholics. You do know that."

Ivan was silent.

"Yes, that would be a difficulty," he admitted at last.

"Well, what would he say about that?"

"I don't know. We mightn't have any."

Despite her bitterness, a gleam of humor rose for a moment in Anne.

"Oh, no," she said, "that's not enough."

"You go a long way," said Ivan. "I hadn't thought of all this."

"I should have to," said Anne.

"I see." Ivan gazed away to the soft gray smudges of London in the far distance, then he turned to her once more.

"Oh, well," he said, "it doesn't matter. We must arrange something. Look here," he said suddenly, and seized her arm. "There's evidently more in this than I

imagined, but I don't care. We'll simply tell him anything, be as convincing as possible, appear to conform to all regulations, and then afterwards it won't matter. He can't say anything. We can do as we like. There'll be fearful rows, of course, but I don't suppose when once he finds I'm really married he'll do anything fearfully drastic. He'd simply hate the idea of the line being changed, of course, in that way, but he'll have to get used to it. After all, though I know you don't think so, what is religion, when all's said and done? Jewish or Catholic, I shan't care, and father will be getting too old."

Anne was silent for a few moments, then she said quietly:

"Ivan, what does he say now, about your marrying Sadie? He threatens you, doesn't he?"

"Yes, of course. He wants me to have her or leave the Firm, I believe."

Anne thought of the years ahead, with an old and querulous, and cantankerous Mr. Schenstein, still possessing a hold upon his son, greater than any power of hers. She could imagine the same threat brought out again, enlarged with added intimations concerning his intention to leave Ivan out of his will should Ivan think fit to thwart his wishes, and Ivan, older, grown rather less independent with custom, and age, the same Ivan as now, never understanding the importance of things, ever inclined to give way, intimidated easily by the fear of losing everything.

"Won't it be just the same in ten years' time, if you don't do what he wants?"

He glanced at her quickly and said nothing.

"Ivan," Anne said sorrowfully, "it is impossible."

For a long time they were both very quiet, then he said slowly:

"You don't, I suppose, think you're a trifle unreasonable, Anne? As far as I can make out, you want me to do everything, so that you can keep everything in peace and

comfort. That's what I want you to do. But how can it be asking you to give up a thing, just to—well, pretend for a time?"

"But it will be for ever."

"Oh, but it won't. That's absurd. For one thing he won't live for ever, and for another his living won't have anything to do with us. He can think what he likes, to preserve peace, but you'll be able to do as you like. The synagogue business can, I've no doubt, be waived. And you can't think I should want to start interfering with your ideas of God. You can have a Church in the house if you like, or a shrine to Buddha, and as for the future—er—generations, well, taking it that there ever are any, they can go to Church where you want them to. Father, who ought to be about eighty-five by then, will think quite happily that they're good little Jews, and like that, everything will come out as it should with no fuss. The synagogue wedding-affair may be a bit hard to get round at first, but I'm simply going to take a firm stand and assert my rights. I should be surprised if he does anything desperate."

Anne, listening, felt oppressed with a strange sense of unreality. As if she were audience to some farcical, tragic piece of fooling. It was all empty, a shell of planning and scheming with no substance to give it weight. The whole point was simply being consistently overlooked. Ivan's idea of what was a trust, a promise, of what mattered, so completely differed from hers. They were aiming at different goals, and spoke a different language. Her convictions could not enter into his considerations. He tossed everything, belief and practise and results and conclusions, lightly up like a bag of feathers, and turned away with a laugh. And it would always be so. She looked at him, talking away, his face to the wind, his eyes fixed into space, earnest, but untroubled, and to her, loving him, not for a false idea of exaggerated nobility, not for virtue entirely uncharacteristic of his personality, but rather for the pe-

culiar combination of lights and shades, for the love and hope and simplicity, the passion and gloom and duplicity of his nature, the strange admixture of race. For a beauty and a strength in Ivan, as for a folly and a weakness, for his shallows as for his depths; loving him so, the knowledge that he had, in a few words, made such love the last consideration in the world, was a pain like to the joy of his presence. And when he stopped and looked at her, waiting, she could only shake her head once more and say, "It's impossible."

He said nothing, and she saw a line between his brows, and a tiny look of hardness in his eyes.

"Because it wouldn't happen," she explained piteously, "nothing ever is like that in real life. When you were used to me, and your father pressed a point, and held that terrible money threat over you, you'd want me to give way whatever it was, and think me unreasonable if I wouldn't, and then quite soon, you'd begin to be bored, and dislike me and my ideas which could make it all so difficult."

"I wouldn't," said Ivan positively.

Anne looked at him. They were trailing over the grass very slowly now, staring down with bent heads most of the time, only glancing up suddenly, when a thought occurred, as people do walk, who are discussing very seriously.

"And then," continued Anne, after a time, "although I know you love me . . ."

"Oh, you do know that, then," interpolated Ivan.

Anne nodded.

"Although I know that, I know also that, you don't, you simply can't possibly enter into my views on practically any single thing that matters, and it's no use thinking that wouldn't hurt; if marriage only lasted about two years it mightn't, but in a whole long life it breeds some sad misunderstandings."

There was silence for some time, then:

"Well," said Ivan, "there may be a lot in what you say,

but personally I can't think of a single point upon which our views don't more or less correspond. We like and hate and laugh at the same things always. And though I may not be a Catholic, I haven't the least objections to entering fully into your sympathies in that direction. To me, Catholicism seems as excellent as most religions, the outlet for a certain temperament. But I don't mind believing it all if you really want me to. I can't see where we should disagree, particularly." He paused. Anne was looking away, with dreamy far-off eyes. "But of course," he went on, "if you think that, you evidently don't feel sure of marriage; in that case I'm sorry, but I quite see that you'd rather not take any risks." He stopped and returned to the ground, all offended dignity. As if she had not noticed that he no longer spoke, Anne still stared away, in silence.

"Perhaps," he started again, "you haven't a very clear idea of what love is, Anne. You seem to think that the first thing to do when you fall in love is to settle down and lay out a lot of plans, and bring out innumerable objections. To look at you, one would have imagined you would have known more about love than that. I'm in love with you, and though I admit, just now, I'd like nothing better than to shake you thoroughly, not even your way of talking makes any difference to me. I suppose we're not alike, but my way of being in love is not to let any consideration whatever come into things. Just to love, you know."

Another silence, then Ivan tried another line altogether.

"Oh, Anne, my darling sweet," he cried, "what are you thinking of? What does it matter! What can anything matter? You love me, what else is there to think about? Be human! You're not cold. Why do you pretend to be? In the name of God, say, 'Yes, darling, of course, I'll marry you,' or something like that. You're too lovely to look so immovable. Anne, nothing shall be troublesome

when we're married. I'll tell father anything you like; he won't turn me off, but if he does I'll work. But he won't. Mother adores you. We shall have such a good time. And we can laugh at every one, at the Weinhers and all that crowd. Nothing will matter." He put both arms about her again and drew her to him. "Anne, this is all that matters. You can't possibly not know it." And he touched her face with his lips, and smiled at her coaxingly, and put one finger to her cold smooth cheek, by its coil of golden hair, bringing her to a standstill. And still Anne said nothing, only stood, upright and stiff, with half-closed eyes, and waited. Ivan kissed her again, then he drew away a little. "Relentless?" he inquired. "It's like kissing a stone goddess . . . Pygmalion loved so much that his statue changed into a living woman. I love so much that my living woman, in silent protest, changes into a statue. You're a queer girl, Anne."

Anne spoke suddenly, drawing herself away.

"I know I am," she said. "Look, already you think so. What will you think when we are married?"

Ivan beat his head in exasperation and despair. "Anne, I could swear. I shall swear. You're enough to drive any human being to the devil! I only said that because you don't seem to respond to me at all now. Not because of anything you've said about religion. I quite understand your feelings about that, and to show I do, I'm ready to make any terms under the sun. I honestly think I have made a good many. But you are so queer about love. You say you love me. Something, I suppose that one kiss, tells me that you do, then why, in heaven's name, behave like this? Queer! I can't imagine any woman anywhere who could feel as horribly stiff as you do. Queer's the word! You *are* queer."

He let her free again, and they were walking on. It seemed to Anne that she was as near to feeling dead as she could and still live. It was as if she had run full tilt

into a blank wall, and stunned herself against it. There simply was nothing she could say, lucid enough to form a proper explanation. The whole point, Ivan's complete lack of any realization of the importance of her Faith to her, his unconscious assured manner of settling her difficulty, his whole-hearted missing of the point, this that kept her, held her with the terrible understanding of its significance, was all she had to say. And this he simply could not see; his outlook was different altogether from hers, and the incompatibility formed a barrier between them subtle but none the less strong. He would never know that she could love him dearly, and still not dare to marry him. He knew no love beyond his own. Besides, still wandering on at his side, Anne reflected with the weary sickness of disillusionment, Ivan only wanted her in addition to all he already had. Really, he was not prepared to relinquish one thing more of his possessions than he could possibly help in order to secure her. He did love her, but his love was such an imperfect passion with him, a passion admixed with so much that was carnal and self-centered, that loving her he could not give up much. Whatever he said about his disgust of his family, in truth, he did not really mind it, or at least, did not fear it, with *her* motives. For the sake of comfort and wealth he would settle down easily into that household, perfectly content, so long as he could revile it often enough, with every protestation of contempt and dislike. As he did not understand now, so he would not at any time, if she took him upon those meaningless, inadequate terms, that were all he would offer.

His mother had been faced with this same thing, once, and had given way, and lived ever afterwards in unceasing regrets, hating her ties and the people among whom she dwelt. In the name of love alone, Anne cried within herself, she dared not follow such an example. She sighed, and another thought came to her. "If he wants you and more than you, if you could be his only accessible path to

God, if he's alone and in need, then, if you have it in your heart to love him . . ."

Ah, but Mrs. Schenstein had not thought it could be like this. She had imagined her son whole-hearted, had overlooked the trammels of that hopeless dependence. But if only it could be otherwise. If he would but come, unhampered by that horrible deference to other claims. It was too much to expect. There was, indeed, no reason why he should give so much, and he might find plenty of women, less exacting than was she. Others had not to consider as she must consider. Others had not her ties. She was bound to expect too much, and so he would go.

Anne sighed again, and Ivan glanced at her.

"Dear," he said.

And she turned at that, and her eyes were soft, and her lips quivered once or twice as she answered, "My dear, I cannot, I wish I could."

Ivan was quiet for a moment, then he said, his voice strained and toneless, "Well, we'll sit down, and you think, and then we'll talk again, only do think well, Anne. Remember, I want you above everything. I mean to do everything even you can want. Keep that in mind, and decide whether it's worth it."

She sat still, not thinking, only waiting, glad of the respite, until he should end the silence by asking her for the last time. Her mind was made up, she had but to hold her decision in readiness. Disappointment, deprivation, longing, wound round her heart and feelings, smothering them to suffocation, but still it was softer and better to be quiet and try not to worry. For a long time they sat, side by side, motionless, both waiting.

The sunlight flecked the warm, brown earth at their feet with a scattering of little shifting, restless shreds of gold, a breeze moved in the tree-tops as if time hung heavily upon its hands, and now a wood-pigeon cooed above them, or a

sound came, indescribable, a murmur of nature and warmth, as if the happy land turned over and sighed contentedly, a healthy young thing asleep in the sun. Sheep rose and fell above a great hump in the hills, a bee hummed, and stopped for a second on the warm wood, suddenly absorbed, then resumed the train of its soliloquizing, and wandered away. And the silence seemed lost in contemplation.

Then Anne moved a little, and drew her breath in a long tired sigh, and Ivan looked up. He studied her face for some time, intently, scrutinizing it as if he would mark it well, something he might not see again, and would guard against forgetting. Then:

"You won't?" he said at last, his eyes on her hands, one in another round her knees.

"I can't," Anne whispered, and her voice caught on a sob, "I can't."

"Because you are afraid of the life, because you don't care to live among my people, because you aren't satisfied with my assurances, because what, Anne?"

"No, because you don't understand," she answered. "You miss the essential point, so I dare not marry you. It's no good," she said, "I can't say any more. It isn't a thing that can be explained . . . but . . ." she stopped. "It's simply a thing I know."

Ivan was silent, turning this over in his mind.

"You don't love me enough to marry," he said at last.

"That's not the reason," Anne said. "You know it's not, Ivan." Ivan relapsed again into silence, thinking deeply, then he turned:

"Well, I'm simply at a loss," he said. "I can't make you out. At first I thought it was all going to be perfect, and then I said something or other about arranging things, and you turned suddenly all the other way, and now you say you love me but you can't marry me, and all the reason

you've got to give is something vague about my not understanding. It's not good enough, Anne. You must have a proper reason."

"You've just said it," cried Anne. "It's exactly the way you take my reason that makes it all so impossible. Your standpoint is so utterly different. Life—mine and yours too—would be a tragedy in a year."

"All I've asked of you is simply that you should do all you can to help me make our marriage as easy as possible. I expect it will be difficult enough in any case, but I know that if only your ideas needn't be made too aggressive, if only we can make some sort of a show of keeping in with father's, that it'll be bound to make a lot of difference. Of course we needn't; we can simply go off and get married, and father will get the shock of his life when he finds I've married a Christian girl, and intend giving up all ideas of carrying on in the family; he might not cut me off for ever, but I should think, having seen him about twice in a real rage, that he very probably would. Still, we might do that, and doubtless, I could make some sort of a living; we shouldn't starve, of course, but it would be damnably uncomfortable. You wouldn't like it any more than I should. But on the other hand, we can approach the thing circumspectly, lay ourselves out to father in the most charming way. I would take him out to dinner and try and get him a bit, you know . . . and I'll simply coo in his ear and present you in the most alluring colors imaginable. I had thought of telling him you had Jewish blood in you, and leanings in that direction and so on, but I suppose you wouldn't like that. Well, and then I'll make out that you're one of those wonderful women, simply splendid in the home, you know, and the mother of a race and all that sort of thing, and how we want above everything to be very obliging. It might take a good while, but I'm sure I could bring him round after a time; if not, I'd wind up by taking another line and begging him more or

less with tears in my eyes to be more considerate. Put it to him that I have some right to my own choice in a thing like marriage, and if he still shakes his head and looks firm, as one driven simply beyond endurance, I'd rise to my feet with great dignity and say: 'Very well, it would be too ignominious for me to stay where I am under such jurisdiction any longer. I will go and work for my living.' That would end it I'm certain, and of course always provided he's drunk enough." Ivan stopped in a perfect glow of self-righteous explaining. Anne was listening, staring at him with fascinated eyes. He met her gaze, then dropped his key considerably, "But apparently I've asked too much." He stopped. Anne sat silent, ruminating. "I suppose I could make some sort of a living," he had admitted grudgingly.

Well, if he failed so utterly to see the absolute necessity of independence, if he could not see the fallacy of these extraordinary, unstable, groundless plans, it was not for her to tell him so. Certain kinds of perception cannot be induced by suggestion. Ivan might acquire a different outlook, but in his present state of mind no appeal, no reminder of hers would give it to him. And since he could not bring himself to suggest it, she would have died rather than say: "Why not work, Ivan? I shouldn't mind. You think too much of being a little poorer." Since he evidently did not realize it, she could not bring herself to say, "Which would you rather be without—your present position or—me?" That was the whole point, but—there are those things which no one, not even a lover, can say. Anne only kept very quiet.

"Well," said Ivan, after a time, looking up from the ground at his feet, "so it's hopeless?"

Hopeless! Anne eyed the word as a shivering child might eye the cold waves, standing on the brink, delaying the dreaded inevitable plunge. It was too much to ask of her. Hopeless! A word Ivan would seize, in his dear

selfish way, and immediately apply as owing to her. A word to settle in and consume the heart. And yet . . . to live with Ivan, living on Ivan's father! A moment's vision saved Anne—among that family of people who would immediately regard her in precisely the light they regarded Ivan's mother. With nothing ever settled, no definite understanding upon anything, struggling to preserve separate and unviolated her own innate instincts of Christianity, beset by a hundred unimaginable retarding persuasions and forces, ever faced with the necessity for explaining her principles and point of view, distrusted as an alien, hated as a disturbing element in that conservative society, "the family," in close contact with many people, strangely, unpleasantly close. Coupled automatically with Mrs. Schenstein the elder, perhaps, in an incredibly short space of time, with her in all earnestness, in her misery and disappointment; and then, Ivan, unhappy, impatient, puzzled, bored, and inevitably embittered towards a creed which could keep such an immovable hold upon his wife. An atmosphere heavy enough to smother love in the shortest time, and without love—disaster! Anne shuddered. Here was hopelessness besides which the wrench of parting was salvation. She turned to Ivan.

"I mean," she said, "that it's insupportable in its present form." Then she looked away. There was silence. Ivan laughed.

"I admire you, Anne. You've got a wonderful command of language. You mean it's not good enough."

She faced him again then, and her wide eyes stared his out.

"But can't you see that? How can it be good enough? For love? How can the kind of thing you'd have be good enough for love?"

She turned and dropped her eyes, too heavy to speak.

Ivan looked at her carefully. Over his face had come gradually an expression of cynical affront and of ob-

stinacy. It was in his eyes . . . in the curve of his nostril, in the faintest protruding of his under lip.

"Well," he said casually, "I think we'd better be getting on, don't you? I mean, there doesn't seem much point in saying any more."

Anne said nothing, gazing raptly away to the sunny distance. And he looked at her again, thinking for a moment on what a delight it would be gently to touch that soft pale face, to trace the dark brows, and know the warmth in the arch of her eyelids, her eyelids so smooth and creamy, like the under-petals of a white rose, and to feel her breath again upon his face; she, like a vessel of rare treasure that he longed to make his own; she, so quiet and peaceful, so certain and immovable; by what right did she make him love her only to leave him, to love, alone? . . . Any other woman would have been different, would have been only too pleased. How dare she so trifle with all he could offer? Ivan brooded upon this piece of wicked injustice for some time. Monstrous! He hadn't anticipated being so thwarted. She could do without him. She could sit and weigh everything to scale, decide without bias, and not lose her head. A woman's obstinacy, thought Ivan. The most damnable thing on earth. But he admired her independence nevertheless.

And Anne, still gazing with unseeing eyes across the countryside, was aware of his looking at her, sat, feeling warm beneath his regard, pleasantly, gratefully warm. There was, it seemed, to be such a short while longer, and then no more of his eyes or his voice or his love. Anne shut her eyes. "You're not cold, Anne?" he had said. Cold! when her whole being seemed throbbing with the fire of a deadly wound. Cold! But he had spoken just now, she had known but had not heard. She opened her eyes.

"What did you say?"

"We may as well go."

"Very well," she said, "let's go." And turning to him, and staring at him, all at once, with the utter weariness of depression, the tears came, and as if she were alone, after the going of some loved one, she began to sob softly, gently to herself, her face in her hands.

"I wish you hadn't asked me," she cried. "Oh, I wish you hadn't asked me!"

"Anne." Ivan spoke in low tones.

"I needn't have refused then; I can never forget that I refused you, and now you're going, and . . ." Anne looked up, her cheeks wet, her eyes brimming. "And it's all a dreadful, hopeless ending to everything, and all through me, and yet I can't, I can't help myself, Ivan, really I can't."

"No, dear," said Ivan, "I know you can't. It's no good thinking about it."

Anne turned away and sobbed anew.

Ivan looked at her. And suddenly his sense of injustice faded, and he saw his dear love, a cool spirit dominant over a warm heart, in her distress, and remembered something besides his own misery.

"Oh, don't cry so," he begged. "Anne, dearest, this is my fault. It's been a fiasco. I shouldn't have asked you, Anne; I forgot you might have objections. Don't cry."

"I must," said Anne, "for a little while. I'm sorry."

Tears either repel or attract. Ivan, watching Anne, forgot everything but that she was so forlorn, and that he loved her, and that her slim shoulders shook so. He brooded over her in a perfect ecstasy of tenderness, calling upon her as a rabbit, soft and gray and frightened in a snare, as a bird of lovely plumage, as his sweetest love, his charming lady, and even, moved by the hopelessness in Anne's sobbing, reproaching himself as being the base cause of her tears. "I see, I really can see your point of view," he told her. "It's simply one of those impossible things. I know you can't help it, don't cry." And he smoothed

her hair and kissed it and reiterated again and again, poor Ivan, in perfect good faith, that he knew she couldn't help it. It was one of those impossible things. Anne looked up at last, and stared at him. He eyed her sorrowfully, with soft eyes. That Anne should cry for him after so much hardness, moved him deeply, for he knew well that when a woman cries at last, her tears are genuine, and looking at her he said suddenly: "Oh, Anne, dear, don't you think it really doesn't matter much? Don't you think you could?" Anne was drying her eyes, and she only shook her head. He watched her. "You can cry," he suggested at length, "and yet you can't melt." Perhaps a comparison in hearts of stone occurred to Anne, but she said nothing, only with handkerchief at rest, stared over the grass in preoccupation.

"Anne," pressed Ivan, who did not understand, "why won't you leave all that nonsense, and let us get married? It can't hurt." Still Anne stared in silence. Ivan waited a moment, then he said the very last thing he had to say, "Anne, what if I worked, and we left the family altogether, would you then?" But a concession made as a last resource comes with a hint of the grudge, however generous it may be. It is the last price of bartering, and repelling at that.

Anne's very heart turned from such yielding; she looked at him.

"Ivan," she said, "I can't."

Ivan looked away instantly.

"You are hard," he said.

Anne bowed her head.

"You have every reason to think so. That is the price I must inevitably pay."

She got up. "Shall we go now?"

Ivan followed her. "It's final?" he said.

"No," answered Anne.

He looked at her curiously.

"What change do you expect? What more can there be?"

She said nothing, only led the way down a little slope. Ivan, keeping behind, followed meditating.

So, apart from each other, they wended their way up and down across the heath. Anne walked on with downcast eyes. And she thought to herself: "This is what was always to happen to me. This is what has been waiting all my life. This sacrifice. To have lived only for this!" And then her name sounded on the air, and she turned. Ivan had stopped and called her, waiting for her to come to him. She walked back slowly.

"Anne," he said when she came up to him, "anything but this. We might have quarreled. Can't we at least make a good ending?" She eyed him silently. "You've decided," he said. "It can't matter that we finish the time well. Come and have tea." He took her arm. "Look, let's walk together. Come to Jack Straw's Castle." She let him have her arm, and they walked on. They hardly spoke a word, only Ivan, glancing sideways, met Anne's gaze upon him, as if he were the last precious thing her eyes would ever see in this world. "Poor Anne," he said, "you look so cold and tired."

"I am," she admitted, passively. "Very tired."

He laughed after a moment's silence.

"A lot can happen in an hour. We're changed since we started out."

Changed! Anne echoed the word to herself. That golden dream and now . . .

They had their tea by a window overlooking the heath, and Ivan staring out at the wide far spaces, remarked, "We are the most extraordinary people, you know. Civilization makes us safe anywhere. It would seem that all alone with nothing around but grass and sky and distance, we should lose our sense of fitness and forethought and be natural. Yet all that occurred to us was the dry legality

of discussion. Or at least, nearly all. We could have had it out just as satisfactorily in the most prosaic of tea-shops. But I suppose Paradise itself couldn't drive the civilized outlook out of such as we. Are we inhuman or overhuman, Anne?"

"Just human," said Anne. "It's human to be unhappy and tied down and beset by reasons and objections."

"I don't think I'm human," said Ivan. "I don't know myself this afternoon."

So they sat facing each other, and talked a little, and looked out of the window, and Anne ate nothing and kept thinking, "It's coming now. Soon we shall say good-by and it will be over—over for good, for of course he will never come back."

They lingered as long as possible. Then at last Ivan said, "Well, it's no use prolonging the agony. Give me something of yours, Anne. Your handkerchief, I'll have that."

"It's still damp," she said, and gave it to him.

"Yes," said Ivan, "I shall keep it with your tears. You can't give me anything else, I suppose?" He looked at her. She glanced up, and her face became even whiter than it already was. "No," said Ivan, "we must always be very good and think for the future, I suppose. Anne, you're sublime."

Anne rose. They were alone and she went to the far window, and stood at it, waiting till such a time as she could speak. In the end she said, looking at him, "Don't forget me, Ivan."

He made no answer for a long time. He had risen and stood looking down on the table. Then he replied, soberly, "No, dear, not that. That isn't what I shall be likely to do."

He waited at the gate of the Weinhers' house, watching to see the last of her. He could see her, standing, a dark figure, in the porch. Then there came a great yellow

square of light, and the hall door was opened and shut. He walked away, depressed and filled with some feeling of having, unaccountably, left everything possible unsaid; that—and this he felt was strange—she was not to blame; that, almost against his will and common sense, he still loved her—loved her even more than ever. He walked on through the dusk.

An agile shadow, poised cautiously on the extreme edge of the Weinhers' drawing-room blind, slid off it as he went.

CHAPTER X

THE ARID WASTE

THE Schensteins took the next morning after their usual particular fashions. Rain was falling, silent and steady, under a dead sky, and Mr. Schenstein descending, oppressed with a sense of disillusionment and the utter injustice of life, hard-eyed and glum-faced, was filled with an accompanying sense of venom and ostentatious determination. "Something," though exactly what he was not sure, "would have to be done about something," concerning the precise nature of which he was equally uncertain. It was his morning mood.

Mrs. Schenstein came down, a thing she seldom elected to do (but she had her whims) in something of lace and silver and down, like the pale morning wraith of a wonderful night, feeling tired, bored, dull, depressed with the certainty that she would soon have to see Mr. Schenstein.

And lastly appeared Ivan, resentful that he must leave his bed. The usual remarks went their round. "Who makes this coffee? Tell them not to use last night's grounds, will you?"

"I will." Mrs. Schenstein gave her composed half-glance from her letters.

Ivan put in a sardonic "Don't forget," and Mrs. Schenstein looked up.

"My dear boy, you've got a headache," she said with concern.

"I feel yellow and foul."

"It's this beastly morning. Why did you come down? You must have an aspirin." Mrs. Schenstein believed in aspirin with vindictive firmness.

"Aspirin," Mr. Schenstein grumbled. "Bad habit. It's enough to give any one a headache a morning like this. I've got one too."

Mrs. Schenstein was busy reading. Ivan looked at her and then at his father.

"You should take an aspirin," he murmured solicitously.

Mr. Schenstein growled. And so on; hopeless, ungracious, dispirited, breakfast at the Schensteins'. But towards the close of the meal Mr. Schenstein looked up.

"I thought of asking the Weinhers over soon," he announced.

Mrs. Schenstein dropped a letter and stared at him.

"Some evening soon," he went on. "I don't see why not. Impromptu invitation I'll make it. Just a little dinner, and we might have bridge. Don't trouble to get much specially."

"Is it settled?" Mrs. Schenstein asked.

"Settled? No! But I'll mention it perhaps to-day, if I happen to run across old Weinher. They'll be delighted."

Mrs. Schenstein eyed the cloth in delicate consternation.

"How many?" she said at last.

"How many?" Mr. Schenstein, for some obscure reason, was always a little inclined to become irritated when pressed concerning his relations.

"Well, probably they'll all come, if they're all free. I don't know."

"Four," said Mrs. Schenstein slowly. "Very well."

"In a day or two," said Mr. Schenstein in a sort of emendation. "I think we might as well."

"Oh, yes, quite." Mrs. Schenstein returned to her letters.

"There's no necessity for me to assist at the family gathering, I suppose?" said Ivan.

"I don't think you need stay away on purpose," answered Mr. Schenstein.

Ivan shrugged his shoulders.

"Well . . . as you like. But if you think I'm going to play bridge with Monty . . . Frankly, I can't afford to play Monty's bridge—the last time . . ." he broke off. Mr. Schenstein laughed quite merrily.

"No, no. I quite appreciate your objections. Quite."

"Monty's a born crook," Ivan said, eyeing his finished plate gloomily. "The very look of him makes you feel you've lost something. No, I think it would be the better way for me to be unavoidably out."

Well, Mr. Schenstein thought, this might be settled or maneuvered later. He was amiably inconclusive. He felt a shade more cheerful now. This, apparently, had been what he had felt needed doing. He had not thought of it at all a few minutes ago; indeed, a few minutes ago, the bare idea of inviting the Weinhers to dine would have filled him with horror, but now, coming on an unusual impulse, it seemed perfectly right and excellent. Sadie would come. He felt rather better. Ivan would be there all right. It could be managed somehow. And this contempt for Montague was nothing by any means to disapprove of. Montague, after all, besides being a sleek bounder, was the son of his partner; there could be nothing out of place in *his* son being clever at his expense. It was somewhat fitting.

"Perhaps something can be effected," he said. "Anyway, there'll be the others, and Sadie."

His sudden glance was of the minutest, but Ivan, meeting it, continued with the Monty theme. "Perhaps Mum will deal with him," he suggested. "She and Monty make the ideal after-dinner couple."

Mrs. Schenstein said nothing.

"Monty's so fond of mother," Ivan continued. "Thinks she's like no one else. He'll tell her he's found a dear little bit of real Honiton he knows she's just looking for, or something. He thinks mother's whole existence is spent in one continual search! Oh, yes, of course, and he'll go on about how he got it dirt cheap from a poor devil who

didn't know what to ask. 'So I managed to corner him,' he'll wind up happily. Mother, you'll manage Monty, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly." Mrs. Schenstein raised her eyes and face very slightly, and down again.

Mr. Schenstein eyed her.

"That's right," he agreed without much enthusiasm. "That'll be all right then. And you, Ivan," he went on rashly, "you'll be able to take Sadie off a bit. Leave Rachel and Julius to me. I can always get on with Rachel and Julius."

Ivan looked up with earnest innocence.

"I feel sure I'd better be out," he replied. "I don't think it would be quite nice for me to take Sadie off a bit. And in any case I'm always doing that. There's no need to ask her here for me to take her off, surely?"

"Oh, not the slightest," Mr. Schenstein concurred. "Not the slightest. What I meant was . . . of course, that you should keep her amused."

"It's a lot to ask," said Ivan with a considering look.

"Why?" Mr. Schenstein became suddenly impatient. "You like Sadie all right."

Ivan passed up his cup. His nostril was curved sharply.

"Well, I won't go so far as that, perhaps," he said. "But I don't really object to being obliging, you know. I mean, if you feel you can't stand the strain of Sadie's rather oppressively intellectual conversation, I've no doubt I might, always supposing I'm there at all, er—well, you know, take her off a bit."

"I don't know anything about Sadie's conversation," Mr. Schenstein observed. There was that in Ivan that could drive all the wit out of his father. In dealing with Ivan, there were times when Mr. Schenstein was almost feeble-minded. "It always seems all right to me. Though, of course, I can't pretend to judge. But I have noticed one thing: you couldn't have a nicer, pleasanter,

better-tempered girl anywhere. And she's not bad-looking either. Full of fun, too."

"She isn't exactly bad-looking," concurred Ivan; "she always strikes me as being completely negligible. Though, of course, I can't pretend to judge."

Mr. Schenstein solemnly shook his head.

"Negligible," he said. "Oh, no, you can't say that. She's a striking girl, whatever she is. You've got to admit that."

"Well, if I've got to, I will; but it's only under compulsion, remember."

"Some people say she's handsome," said Mr. Schenstein.

"There always will be people like that," Ivan nodded. Yesterday's despair had made him careless. "Personally, she always makes me feel as if I'm standing under one of those fearfully ripe peaches. You've only to give it one touch, and it'll drop off in the last stage of luscious ripeness. You know what I mean."

To Mr. Schenstein this sounded amazingly complimentary. He was mystified. He nodded a little, waiting.

"Well," Ivan was rather enjoying himself, "I won't elaborate further. But while I admit green apples are much too sour, I do—speaking absolutely personally, of course—think something that requires some biting rather pleasanter. Ripe peaches!" he added scornfully, "not your taste, surely?"

"My taste?" Mr. Schenstein was mild from bewilderment. "I'm afraid I don't quite follow you. I was saying, Sadie . . ."

"Yes, I know you were," Ivan interrupted. "I called her a ripe peach."

"Yes, well," began Mr. Schenstein, "that's as may be. But I was just remarking how every one thinks so well of her."

Ivan drank off his coffee, and set down his cup. He had

grown tired of the subject. "Let them," he said. "It's all a matter of taste, after all."

"I like Sadie," said Mr. Schenstein.

"You do?"

Mr. Schenstein affected some show of amazement.

"Don't you?"

Ivan lit a cigarette and eyed him through the smoke. On a brighter morning, and had he been without yesterday's memories to weight his head and heart, his sense of humor would have borne him out. As it was, he began to scowl.

"I've never considered her in the light of whether I like her or not," he said slowly. "I've never thought about her at all, as far as I can remember."

There was silence, broken only by the turning of Mrs. Schenstein's page. She had made a letter last while she listened. Then Mr. Schenstein said with some decision:

"I should have thought, I must say, that considering Sadie is . . ." But he got no further. Ivan had risen; he tossed his napkin on the table and looked down at his father. "Oh, damn Sadie!" he said. And marched out of the room.

Later, when she thought it over, Mrs. Schenstein wondered how she managed to contain herself.

But then, as the days went by, she, ever alert to signs and symptoms, began first to fancy and then feel certain that something had gone wrong.

Ivan dragged through a week of sulky silence and morning home-comings. On at least two occasions she knew well that he had only just swallowed a sharp retort to her, and that when she spoke to him about some casual matter, not even remotely connected with Anne Hurst. And, she reflected, if he found her annoying it must certainly mean that he was easily provoked.

To Mr. Schenstein's astonished and furious indignation, he was most conspicuous by his absence on the occasion of

the Weinhers coming to dine, and on being taxed, said with perfect candor that he couldn't have stood a Weinher evening just then. He didn't know which got most on his nerves, Monty or Sadie.

All this made Mrs. Schenstein anxious, but what touched her with real pain was the look on his face, not, despite all the ungraciousness and silence, sullen or angry so much as tired and miserable. He looked as if he had met with some bitter disappointment. "And that accounts for everything," reflected Mrs. Schenstein, "for he's not at all used to disappointments."

That the trouble was to do with Anne, she had not a shadow of doubt.

Anne had paid her a farewell visit one morning early, the morning before she left the Weinhers. She had stopped but a short time, and left, having contrived to keep the conversation on a completely impersonal level.

"You're looking rather tired," Mrs. Schenstein had ventured, looking at her rather wistfully when she was standing to go. Anne had smiled at once. "No," she said, "it's all right."

But that was all.

"Can he have proposed and she refused him?" wondered Mrs. Schenstein, aghast at such a catastrophe. "She looked ill. What can have happened?" She could not decide, and spent the weeks puzzling.

Her distress did not abate when Ivan appeared to have accepted something inevitable, and settled into his usual attitude towards life. He never mentioned Anne, and Mrs. Schenstein was left to brood on the futility of building hopes upon inadequate foundations. But such worry undermined her strength.

CHAPTER XI

A VISIT CAN EVOKE A GOLD HAT

ON hearing that Mrs. Schenstein, having been ill, was shortly to repair to some more congenial climate in order to regain her health, Mrs. Weinher and her daughter sallied forth on a visit of condolences and farewells. For as Mrs. Weinher, occupied with a new hat purchased specially for the occasion, remarked:

"If we are the best of friends, we *are* the best of friends, and that's all there is about it."

Sadie had wandered in on a search for hairpins, and she nodded, looking vaguely about.

"I like Cousin Evelyn," she said. "Always did."

"I'm sorry for her," qualified Mrs. Weinher. "She's no one's enemy but her own."

"Yes." Sadie was raising the lids of various boxes and jars. "But I shouldn't think it's all honey and jam living with Uncle." (There were subtle distinctions in this family, as Mr. Schenstein was referred to as "Uncle," the while his wife was always known as "Cousin.") "She's good-looking," Sadie added.

Mrs. Weinher made a sudden dash for her toilet-table drawer.

"For mercy's sake!" she cried in a moment's sudden irritation. "Don't go mouching about all over the place. There's plenty of hairpins here. Where do you think I keep them? You get on my nerves! Good-looking?" she added after a moment's silence, her annoyance completely vanished.

"Well, I'll say she has been, not so long ago. But

now—why, she looks as if she were going into consumption more than anything else. She's always ill."

She adjusted the hat carefully, and closely inspected the result in her mirror. Then she turned to Sadie.

"There! Now what do you think of that?" Her tones were complacent. "I'm glad I had the gold. How does it look, Sadie?"

"Lovely, Mother." Sadie eyed her perfunctorily. "Simply gorgeous. Makes you look years younger. Yes, I'm glad you had the gold."

"I know I can wear it." Mrs. Weinher began on her coat. "Yes, I don't think it's so bad. No," she resumed, "I wouldn't call her good-looking now. She's so faded. But I can remember the time, when she first came, years ago, she was good-looking then. Really good-looking. In a funny, pale, quiet way, but very attractive. And then she used to dress! Well, I know I used to think I'd be ashamed to spend so much money on myself. Always the very best of everything, and such dresses! I remember a velvet one she had, the year the Boer War ended I think it was, yards and yards of it—they were worn so long, of course—and silver lacy stuff and just as a finish one magnificent cameo. It suited her. It took her to wear it. But it did suit her. She must have cost her husband something though. Not that he tried to stint her, I will say that for him. He used to like to see her doing him credit, and then they were for ever going about, and she always so beautifully dressed. . . . She was thought a lot of in those days, I can tell you, Sadie."

Mrs. Weinher stopped and looked up. Sadie caught her glance.

"Men?" she inquired interestedly. "I never heard that."

"Well, it isn't unlikely. Yes, there used to be one or two. Not that she was one to encourage anything of that sort, I will say that for her; but they were always giving

their evenings, and their dinners, and their this and that and the other, and of course it stands to reason they hung round."

"And Uncle used to get angry, I suppose?" Sadie asked.

Mrs. Weinher stood still, with her back to the glass, suddenly absorbed.

"He didn't take half of it in," she answered thoughtfully. "At least he never showed anything. Though I never thought he could be so dense, myself. But he used to keep a watch on her. She never went far without him, I can tell you. And she didn't like that."

"He doesn't seem to mind what she does now," said Sadie. "She's always going away somewhere."

Mrs. Weinher shook her head, still preoccupied. "No, not now. She's old now. That's all done with. It was the first ten years I'm thinking of most. He didn't trust her, and"—Mrs. Weinher studied her fingers in abstraction—"I'm not so sure he wasn't right. But they were gay," she added, "in those days."

With hands clasping the bed-rail, Sadie bent forward, fascinated by the thought of those long-ago gay days. She had forgotten her hairpins.

"How did she behave to him?" she asked.

Mrs. Weinher was busy again. She shook herself into her coat.

"Oh, well enough. Never too well. Sometimes I've known her as nice as you could want, and then, suddenly, down she'd go, and be as sulky and fretful as she'd look. But she never said much, of course. She daren't."

"And Uncle?"

"Oh, he took it all, sun and storm, quietly enough." There was silence.

"They're not a bit happy," Sadie remarked.

"She's not a woman that could make any one exactly happy," Mrs. Weinher replied. "Too uncertain."

"Why did he marry her, Mum?"

"Looks, I expect. It couldn't have been money."

"No, she hadn't a cent, had she?"

"No." Once more Mrs. Weinher paused, reviewing the past. "I recollect the day he said he was thinking of getting married. We'd got so used to him as a bachelor, we were quite surprised. Monty was a baby then." Mrs. Weinher shook her head in sorrowful reflectiveness.

"Probably that's why she's so fond of spending money now," said Sadie. "Her being poor, I mean. Not used to it."

"She married him for money. There's no doubt whatever about that."

Mrs. Weinher began to look for her gloves.

Sadie still lingered, staring deeply on to the ground.

"She's very fond of Ivan," she said.

"She's spoilt him," Mrs. Weinher said grimly. "As a child he was the same as now. Never seemed to care twopence for any one. He was quite different from either of you."

"He used to tease me," Sadie laughed gaily.

"He did. I wouldn't have him because there was always so much trouble. He wasn't," she said, considering, "a bad child. But a funny child. A child there was no getting on with. Like his mother. I can't say I dislike him now," she added on a thought and looking at Sadie.

"He's improved," Sadie agreed innocently. "He's very good to her. He'll never do anything she doesn't want."

Mrs. Weinher was looking for her gloves.

"I put them," she said, "down there. I remember distinctly. Now where on earth . . . my new gloves, really it's trying."

Sadie, still pursuing trains of thought, did not hear.

"He's going to take her away," she said. "Funny if they never came back." She looked up and laughed.

Mrs. Weinher spied her gloves. "It'd be funny for Ivan," she replied. "He'd be out of a job. Aren't you

ever going to get ready?" she began, remarking suddenly Sadie's unprepared condition. "You'll be keeping me waiting half an hour. Go on now quickly. We're late enough as it is."

Sadie laughed again, and obediently left the room.

Mrs. Schenstein received her guests from a cushioned divan, extending a welcome of gracefully modulated cordiality.

"Oh, yes, I really think I'm much better, thank you," she said. "But the doctor says I do need a complete change. The winter was trying, wasn't it? And then I had two such dreadful colds, and then this attack . . ."

"Makes you thoroughly run-down, doesn't it?" Mrs. Weinher settled herself with hands crossed over an ample waist. She eyed Mrs. Schenstein amiably. "You look as though you wanted a holiday. I heard you were to go a few days ago, so I took the earliest opportunity to come along and say good-by."

"Yes," Mrs. Schenstein murmured. "I'm so glad to see you. And Sadie too. How are you, my dear?"

"Sadie's well enough," said Mrs. Weinher, who often answered for Sadie. "We're all very well—considering," she added rather sharply. "Monty was looking a bit peaked, but I don't think it's much."

Sadie began to laugh.

"Oh, mother! Mother always says Monty's ill, Cousin Evelyn. It's only because he's thin, and that's his nature. He's as well as I am, really. But he likes to think he's got something wrong. It's something for him to talk about. I'm sure," she turned to her mother, "most of the talk at our mealtimes is all about Monty's headaches, and Monty's weak throat, or else he's just having a funny feeling somewhere or other. I never remember Monty when he wasn't going to die soon." She gave a concluding laugh full of nervous humor.

"I didn't say he looked ill, my dear," Mrs. Weinher corrected her with some austerity. "I said he wasn't looking very well, but he'll be going away soon, so . . ."

"He'll be all right," Mrs. Schenstein finished for her, a trifle wearily. "And where does he think of going?"

"Somewhere." Mrs. Weinher was vague. "Germany, most likely. Combine business with pleasure. Tour about, and yet not waste his time at all. Most sensible way of spending a holiday, in my opinion."

"Quite." Mrs. Schenstein nodded gently, with lowered lids. "I do hope he enjoys himself."

There was a silence. A rather peculiar silence. Then Mrs. Weinher found herself.

"And how's Ivan?" she inquired. "He hasn't been to see us lately. We've missed him."

Mrs. Schenstein opened her eyes slowly.

"Very well, thank you," she said. "Hasn't he? He's been rather busy, I believe."

Poor unfortunate Sadie had to break in here.

"Busy! Cousin Evelyn? Not Ivan! Whatever is he thinking of? Ivan's got something better to do than be busy, I should think!"

She giggled brokenly, and looked around with helpless eyes.

Cousin Evelyn observed her, gently smiling. Not that she was angry with Sadie. Sadie annoyed her infinitely less than did the other members of the family. But something else rankled. This kind of thing, this sort of hackneyed raillery came straight out of Sadie's home. It denoted an attitude towards Ivan and directed at herself, depressing and tiring her beyond many things.

"I think it's silly of him," she said in her own special, cool little voice. "But you know what young men are, they simply will work." Another interminable silence. Mrs. Weinher and Sadie sat, speechless and staring. Mrs. Schenstein began to look round the room in vain search for

some fruitful topic for conversation. Nothing seemed remotely appropriate, and she was reduced at last to remarking upon and actually admiring Mrs. Weinher's attire, which instinct and an experienced conception of their relations told her had been assumed on her account, thus selling, as she afterwards said to Ivan, her soul, in a social contingency. "Was it hypocrisy, or was it martyrdom?" she cried. "I, to pander to the crudities over that already super-crude countenance!" Ivan only laughed sarcastically.

Then she rang the bell for tea. She had very little patience, had Mrs. Schenstein, so she rang it without divulging her intention, feeling at the moment scarcely equal to the inevitable storm of polite protestations had she said, "Now, we'll have tea." And Mrs. Weinher sat in a beautiful little silken chair, and stared with tight lips and honest disapproval at her, lying so straight and slim, and yet so softly, amongst all the satin and embroidery and clinging coverlets. She watched and noted everything, fastening with a sort of rapacious distrust on the lovely fragile hands, the magnificent rings, the ghostly pallor, the hair like a dew-spangled web, and the long white neck. Stared, filled with uneasy fascination, drawn almost against her will by the subtlety and charm that irritated her well-nigh beyond endurance. Unimaginative and unimpressionable as she was, Mrs. Weinher always felt worked upon, as if enchanted by some spell, when she came and sat opposite this woman; bad, uncomfortable magic that made her feel awkward and inferior, and somehow unwarrantable. So that when she was with Mrs. Schenstein, from the moment she entered into her presence, Mrs. Weinher hated her, loathed her steadily, infinitely, without mercy or compassion, found her oppressively rich and opulent, and was jealous and vindictive and spiteful as an inevitable consequence. Yet when she had left, after the last false, impertinent good-by, she would forget, and could think of her

again with kindness and tolerance and goodwill, and contemplate quite pleasantly another visit before so very long. But now she sat and watched and waited, and longed for a second to spring and show her claws, just one little satisfying second in which to give this sickening, charming, irreproachable creature one long tearing scratch, something, ah, something to leave a mark. But the moment never seemed to arrive, only other moments, plenty of them, with Sadie, her own daughter, whom people, this person, thought nothing of, sitting silent and shy. This person!! Oh, the beautiful, disgraceful thing! Thus, in all the long years, had Mrs. Weinher visiting Mrs. Schenstein sat, her heart a-fire with a passion that surprised herself.

Over tea, she managed to obtain some small self-satisfaction.

"Ivan looks very nice," she remarked kindly. "He always did give promise of being a fine figure of a man. He's got older a lot since he came home. I think the War improved him, filled him out, gave him an air."

Mrs. Schenstein sipped her tea and nodded.

"Yes, I was thinking so only the other day," went on Mrs. Weinher. "He is getting on too now, isn't he? How old is he? Let me see. Oh, yes, twenty-five, I suppose it must be. Of course. Well," she said, "I do hope, I must say I do hope for his own sake, that he doesn't go and spoil himself."

Mrs. Schenstein's eyes and brows and forehead were raised simultaneously in an indescribable expression.

"I mean," continued Mrs. Weinher hurriedly, "in the way of doing anything too rash. All young men . . . well, nowadays I suppose especially, though I daresay they were always the same, but the War, you know, and one thing and another, all they seem to want is a good time, and I'm sure we can't grudge it to them; but at the same time, when I see some of these extraordinary girls they

pick up with—well, it would be such a pity if he were to do anything very silly."

"It's a question of standards," said Mrs. Schenstein carefully, then quickly to stem the tide of Mrs. Weinher's explanations, "Oh, yes, I entirely agree with you. I'm sure we both hold exactly the same ideas about what is silly and, as you say, rash. But the queer thing is that Ivan doesn't, I'm sure, agree. What I should call rather foolhardy, he would look upon as really inevitable. That makes it a little difficult, doesn't it?"

"Yes." Mrs. Weinher nodded rather gravely. She set down her cup. "Well, I'm sure," she said, "young men will be like that, won't they? But then one must remember that Ivan at any rate has got plenty of good, sound common sense to back him up. He's like his father there. Common sense. It must be a great comfort to you," she finished, and she seemed to fold up her face and put it carefully away, looking at Mrs. Schenstein.

"Common sense certainly can be very useful," admitted Mrs. Schenstein.

Mrs. Weinher found her depth at last.

"I suppose some foolish early marriage was what I had in my mind," she said. "He doesn't"—and her eyes glowed suddenly—"he doesn't want to throw himself away."

"He doesn't indeed," echoed Mrs. Schenstein. "Do you have much anxiety concerning Montague?"

Mrs. Weinher laughed carelessly.

"I never think about him," she answered. "I could trust him anywhere. *He's* got common sense."

"Ah, yes."

In the ensuing quiet Mrs. Weinher considered two courses. One, to intimate that there were schemes afoot on Ivan's behalf, about which Mrs. Schenstein would have little concern or decision, or, and in her present mood, it seemed almost more gratifying, to bring out, by some care-

fully chosen sentence, that any plans of which her daughter was the center, need not necessarily include Ivan. For Mrs. Weinher knew well Mrs. Schenstein's attitude in this matter, and she hugged it, in her bitterness, with unholy ardor.

"Well," she cleared up the discussion, "he's a nice boy, and I must say I think he deserves his fun. I feel certain though that he'll always be ready to please his father in every way. He knows who's been good to him."

"Yes." Mrs. Schenstein was but languid. "Do have one of these little cakes."

Mrs. Weinher's gaze was rigid, held in her reflections.

"We miss Anne, Cousin Evelyn," Sadie remarked. "She's been gone quite a long time now. It seems funny without her. We got so used to having her in the house."

"I expect you do. I liked her so much."

"Yes. I knew you'd like her. Oh, may I? Thanks. They're so nice. Oh, yes, every one likes Anne."

"Perfectly charming," murmured Mrs. Schenstein conventionally.

"A very nice girl," observed Mrs. Weinher.

Sadie laughed in her undecided, uncertain way.

"Monty got—well really—quite keen! I soon saw that. But then he always does get keen on any girl who's good-looking. I told him that he was being silly in this case, for Anne wouldn't have looked at him."

"You told him that?" Mrs. Schenstein smiled. Sadie nodded vigorously.

"Yes, of course. Oh, I don't care what I say to Monty. He was wild, though ! Well, I mean it's not the first time I've told him off about his affairs with girls, but it did seem cheek, really! With Anne, I mean! I said I didn't invite her to stay just to be worried by him. Not that she took any notice, of course—but," Sadie chuckled contentedly, "he did have something to say when I told him to keep off, though!"

Mrs. Weinher turned helplessly from her daughter to Mrs. Schenstein.

"Sadie and Monty have always been perfectly free," she said. "They always say exactly what they think of each other."

"And an excellent plan too," said Mrs. Schenstein in accommodating tones. "Occasions must occur in family life when only a perfectly frank exchange of opinions is adequate. And of course with Sadie and Monty I'm sure it is never allowed to overstep the boundaries of what is strictly impersonal and friendly. Unreserved definitions can be so usefully forceful, I think, sometimes, don't you?"

"Yes." Mrs. Weinher sounded a trifle doubtful. "But as for Anne," her voice rose a shade higher. "Well, they all used to play about together in the evenings, but I know Monty hadn't an idea in his head beyond that. He's like Ivan—you know what I mean."

"Yes," Sadie nodded. "That's it. But of course Ivan was perfectly mad on Anne. But then every one knew that. That was different."

"Don't be so silly, Sadie," Mrs. Weinher's color rose above her paint. "I'm sure it wasn't."

"Oh, Mum!" Sadie laughed; then seeing her mother's mortified annoyance, and Mrs. Schenstein regarding her with a smile of amused appreciation, she stopped suddenly, "Oh, well, Ivan's like that, isn't he?" she finished, and relapsed into silence.

"It seems Anne was popular," observed Mrs. Schenstein brightly. "Really, it makes one feel quite glad to be out of the running. So much attention must be conducive of blushes. And now that blushing's so crudely out of date, it must be rather difficult at times to preserve one's equilibrium. I suppose you're so accustomed to it all, you have got over the stage of being easily embarrassed, Sadie?"

"It takes a lot to make me blush," answered Sadie, plac-

idly finishing the cream on her plate. "It's something to do with my skin."

Mrs. Weinher cleared her throat. "Well," she said, "I think we've kept you talking quite long enough. I really only meant to call in for ten minutes, and here we've been talking away for ever so long. But I'm glad to have seen you. You don't look so bad as I expected, from all accounts, I must say."

"No, I don't see much difference from usual," said the faithful Sadie, "I thought you'd be looking ever so ill."

"I'm glad I look better," said Mrs. Schenstein.

Mrs. Weinher had risen and stood buttoning her gloves.

"Ivan's taking you away, I hear," she remarked.

Mrs. Schenstein nodded.

"Oh, well, tell him to come along and see us when he gets back."

She stooped for her bag.

"I will," said Mrs. Schenstein. She recognized clearly the subtlety in this invariable practise of always making frequent allusion to Ivan on some pretext or other. In it lay the irritant of a reminder, "He's not yours to keep to yourself, you know, my dear. He belongs to his family. We discuss and consider him as ours too. His father wants him to belong to us. We have our plans about him."

"He will remain out with me, I daresay," she said. "But that won't be for very long. I shall be too bored to stand it in a week, I expect. When he comes back . . ."

"Well, I hope you'll come home really better." Mrs. Weinher bent over the invalid. "South of France you're going to, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"It ought to do you some good. Well, then, we'll say good-by. It's been very nice to see you again, hasn't it, Sadie?"

"Rather." Sadie advanced. "Good-by, Cousin Evelyn.

I do hope you'll get all right again." Cousin Evelyn received the spreading impress of a kiss warm with sincerity and adhesive with coloring matter, and made a noble effort to appreciate it for what it was worth.

"Thank you so much," she murmured. "It's so kind of you."

"Well, now, come along." Mrs. Weinher moved to the door. "Sadie, you've got your gloves? And there's your handkerchief under that chair. Be quick."

Sadie dived down and retrieved the handkerchief. Then she followed to the door. Mrs. Schenstein prepared to breathe a sigh of relief.

"I don't know how it is, Sadie always drops something," said Mrs. Weinher. "She'll lose her head some day. She doesn't get it from me—dropping things, I mean. Now are we ready? Well, good-by, once more."

"Good-by," said Mrs. Schenstein. The door nearly closed then shot open again, and Mrs. Weinher looked in.

"I nearly forgot. Give our love to Solomon."

"I will."

The door shut. For some moments Mrs. Schenstein lay still, very still, staring into space. Then she smiled slightly.

"This is what comes of being ill," she reflected. And took up her book.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRACTICAL STANDPOINT

MR. SCHENSTEIN, nomadic, of a wandering race, was enjoying himself as only a Schenstein can. Alone, with a loneliness that was very satisfying, he had come out of Germany and was progressing through Poland, detached and unconcerned. In the lounges of strange little hotels wherein he sat in the evenings, his reflections rising and merging with the smoke of the cigar, Mr. Schenstein would remember dimly that somewhere people whom he would be the first to admit had claim upon his attention, existed; that he had a wife, playing her old game of recuperation in some expensive resort, but it was a long way away, too far to worry about. In the hidden, peculiar vicinities wherein Mr. Schenstein in Strasbourg mornings and Warsaw afternoons, was busy in anonymous and careful transactions, where repairing, he brooded secretly with purpose, in the shades of hidden chambers of commerce and trade, it would occur to him, as he talked unscrupulously about oil, and purchased sundry odd quantities of silk, and did a small trade in lace, and drew speculation out of odd commodities, immature brandies, potatoes, or cotton stockings, that, somewhere, too, his son Ivan was doing something, the nature of which he knew little, save that it must certainly be wasting valuable time; or as, with furtive passion, and a painful sense of values, he would let out with economy a little of his soul, and drank strange, heart-felt wines to the strains of a wild music, and lingered doubtfully, with grudging appreciation of this pale hovering shadow of a dream that

reason told him was injudicious, or that rare remnant of throbbing reality that experience told him did not pay, and therefore was a mistake, he would consider how that dear, worrying, unsatisfactory son was living, no doubt, his own careless life, without a thought for the future, or the responsibility of a name, or ensuring the generations or any of the things that matter, and he would pause and dwell on the consideration.

But a Schenstein on a little well-earned holiday is a Schenstein determined to have one and not waste money or time, so that none of these otherwise preeminently disturbing reflections were permitted to mar appreciably the quiet and rest and rejuvenation of living a short span of life on one's own, of spending a little money and making a lot, of being characteristic in a typical element.

And then, in Warsaw, he received a cable stating that his wife was suddenly seriously ill, taking it for granted that he would be anxious to see her, and putting it to him briefly that if he would see her alive, it would be as well to hurry himself.

Mr. Schenstein sent back a hasty inquiry in code. First he put, "*Is there hope of improvement? Awaiting reply, Father,*" but over this he pondered; it seemed so completely unsatisfactory, and yet so exactly embodied what he wanted understood, for only in the very last extremity did Mr. Schenstein care to curtail a stay that involved a business deal of first-rate importance, and Ivan, excited, was given to exaggeration. . . .

Another moment's hesitation and then he wrote: "*Is improvement possible? Important business keeps me. Awaiting reply,*" and for some reason he let that go. And a few hours later another message said "Dead"!

In a frame of mind as extraordinary as indescribable, Mr. Schenstein took this last plain statement into the hotel smoking-room; there he sat sunk deep in his chair, staring at nothing with unseeing, heavy eyes.

He had never quite known how he regarded her health and its lapses. With her sudden inexplicable fits of slackness, the weak utter inability which had seemed to constitute her frequent breakdowns, he had never had any patience. He knew that she had fostered, in a spirit of ennui and a desire to annoy, a state of perpetual debility, and out of a certain motive of subtle defiance, generally contrived to be too stricken to attend to any of his projects or accompany him anywhere on any pretext; yet at the same time, he had never entirely disapproved of her—woman and his wife—being such a weak creature. There was something in her state which appealed to him as fitting. Lying about like that she couldn't get up to much harm, and posed on a sofa among her cushions she looked as ornamental and creditable as he could wish. And then it showed him so plainly that he was so much the more powerful. A strong woman who rose early and made nothing of a walk, who saw to her own business, and assumed a definite position, would have been trying. Difficult to deal with, and yet essentially one to be dealt with. But with this pale, passive creature, her one refuge and defense had been her silence, and silence could do no one any harm. And then, instinctively, he had known her fragility as a fact typifying her position in relation to himself. She was weak. It was a good thing sometimes for a woman to be that. A feminine creature of little account, one who demanded neither respect nor consideration, who only needed keeping; who looked well about the place, and contrasted adequately with himself; one to be dressed up, decked with jewels, and kept, a veiled, painted being, behind the lattice of his will. So, to see her reclining in slight outline beneath the clinging coverlets, white fingers in the leaves of a book, wan-faced, languid-eyed, never annoyed him: rather he was reassured and satisfied and full of contempt.

But now it appeared there had come a great change. She was dead. That was different, another point of view.

Dead. Difficult to regard her from such a standpoint. Dead. Strange to consider her as nothing, absolutely nothing at last.

She, who had, despite that easy weakness, managed to give him more trouble and anxiety than any one, even his son, had ever done. She, who had given him that son and then, with her innate lack of reason, tried to assert some right over him, tried, and perhaps succeeded. She, who had withdrawn from his first decisive mandate, and ever since brooded apart from him, and never consented to come forth and forgo her resentment. She, who had been his wife, and yet taken pains to make manifest her aversion. She, who had stood in the shadows at his side, eyeing him, wide-eyed in the discomfort of his presence. She, who had averted her glance to be relieved from the ordeal of meeting his. She, to be dead!

Mr. Schenstein with an effort brought his mind to bear upon the consideration. A strange, unhappy, difficult being, an irritant in the concord of a family, an unapproachable person, inevitably apart.

Perhaps, Mr. Schenstein faced a possibility struck by its significance, perhaps she had been unhappy, really unhappy, not with the needless misery of her own temperament and regrets, but really in an agony, a poor mistaken, wrong-headed creature, but, mayhap, one to be pitied now that she was dead. . . .

After a long time, still with his gaze on the unyielding spaces of preoccupation, Mr. Schenstein thought with shy retrospection of another side of it all. And then she was tall and slender and divinely fair. A thing to be dreamt of, a thing that, as with dreams, broke and faded and spoilt in the handling. A thing he had thought worth winning, so young and beautiful, and youth and beauty the only considerations once. And who—even he—could have thought of caution, of wisdom and mistrust of appearances when appearances slew every instinct save hope, every

impulse save desire? In those days . . . before the return of common sense and the inevitable comprehension and disillusionment, just at the very first, what was it, what were the memories, stirring and shifting among and behind all the things discarded and stored in the attics of his mind? That pale, sweet face, and the pathetic, lingering voice, wherein lay some strange power, some charm, so that others would fade beside it, and people, seeing her, would stare and become unconscious, rapt, absorbed. The lightness and abandon of just a very short time, the delicious worry of seeing her amidst a group, the satisfying pride of possession, merely memories, but if she were dead. . . . A vague sensation oppressed Mr. Schenstein, an uneasy sense of the strangeness and novelty of this sudden development (for even now, in the first realization of the fact, he regarded it as such). For though she had always been ailing and uncertain, it seemed an unlikely, awesome thing that she should be dead. With innate appreciation of the drama and pathos of the moment, with that and hardly anything besides, Mr. Schenstein considered her in this new unaccustomed light. Dead. Never a force, never a power, or an influence, or a worry again. Never to be reckoned with, just gone. In his heart, with the honest self-knowledge of a people as simple as unconventional, Mr. Schenstein knew himself to be glad. It was the end, the conclusion of difficulty, and . . . he wouldn't have to think about her any more. But still, Death revives the most uncommon sensations; it was possible to be sorry for her now that she was dead.

A curious phenomenon, Mr. Schenstein, squat, ungainly, a grotesque being, wreathed in philosophic tobacco-smoke, oppressed with the nearness and novelty of death. Mr. Schenstein, as simple and unpretentious a being as was ever misjudged in an artificial community. A creature who accepted life as it appeared to him: clearly a state in which to eat and drink, obtain by any means the easiest and most

direct the essential wherewithal for existence, safeguard oneself, and in self-preservation trust no one, and gain consolation out of as much of that which is desirable as it is possible to accumulate, live without a qualm or regret, but, that responsibility may not be too overwhelming, loneliness too annihilating, believe in yourself and in God. Out of such philosophy can very easily arise the essentially practical standpoint, "My wife, who, during her life, was of no special value or interest to me, is dead. Death is a catastrophe and, humanly speaking, regrettable, but for myself, I still have a son."

Thus the embodiment of a dignity and gentility he would have been the first to question and distrust, sat Mr. Schenstein.

With a feeling that there was now nothing more to be said, but that he would have to say something, he despatched another message, arranged to employ as few words as was decently possible, asking for details and whether there would be time for him to return and be of assistance, expressing a sense of being appalled. Three days elapsed before he received an answer, and Mr. Schenstein, left thus in uncertainty, began to view his position as intolerable. He was concerned in the matter, it was his own wife, and he was being kept in ignorance of arrangements; he would go over, only it seemed futile now, but Ivan—Mr. Schenstein fumed vaguely—it was his fault. Then he got a cable, stating everything most definitely, without the least attempt at economical curtailment of explanations.

"There is nothing you can do," it ended decidedly. "I will meet you in Paris as soon as you can get there."

Mr. Schenstein knew well what scorn, what decisive superiority, what outraged regret and love gave the message its hard intolerance. And he thought how she had done that for him, she, by a subtlety too deep for him to realize in its working, had given his son that attitude towards himself. She had worked upon him all his life, arranged their

comparisons, appealed to him in a sense that could not fail, played upon the refinements and fastidiousness she had given him, curious sensibilities, as strange as the grace he got from her, drawn him to herself, till with her he eyed his father with a cool, removed, disinterested glance. He adored her, "he will almost blame me for her death; no wonder he treats me now as if I had no part, no claim; it's because he's feeling her death, and special concern for her must induce an impudent contempt for me!"

Something in this strain ran Mr. Schenstein's reflections, but even in his bitterness he thought that now it would be at an end; she was gone, and just because of that Ivan would surely adjust his attitude. It was a comforting reflection; as a piece of logic, it appealed to Mr. Schenstein as being adequate; as a likely issue, he dismissed it as being too uncertain to be reassuring.

"If she hadn't gone," another time the thought came to him.

"None of this might have happened, if she had not gone away."

"I think something might do me good," those detached tones came to him vividly.

"I think I would like to go away." . . .

"All right," and so she had gone.

"Well, I didn't send her anyway." Mr. Schenstein reflected, and felt easier in his mind.

CHAPTER XIII

BEGUN IN 1917

IT was a queer thing, scarcely a letter. It had something of the monotony of the diary, the plain statements of the journal, the defenseless request of a last testament.

"You'll find it among my papers, Ivan. I brought it with me. It's not particularly interesting, but I should like you to read it." So she had said, when she told him she could recognize the end. "I am not deceived this time. I shouldn't have come here, really. But perhaps it is all for the best."

Sitting now in the train, returning without her, leaving her in an unobtrusive corner of that unpretentious little sandy churchyard, Ivan took her letter again and reread it, seeming to hear, in the running lines of her writing, the rise and fall of her voice, so characteristic, so typical were they of her.

"Commenced," it began, "during September, 1917." Yes, Ivan thought he could imagine that commencement. On some quiet, lonely, reflective afternoon, she, by herself in her room, tried and bitter doubtless, from some recent encounter with his father. Suddenly filled with the craving for relief in writing. He could see her sitting at the window, her absorbed pen untiring, her spirit draining the satiating draught of self-expression . . . writing to him.

"DEAREST IVAN,—

Whatever may now enter my head to put down will, in all probability, never be seen by you. No doubt I shall

perceive its utter inadequacy and tear it up. But the mood is upon me, and there appears to be a need of something definite, plain upon paper, for you to know.

I cannot say exactly what feeling prompts me; you are away and in so much real danger, and the last few weeks have been unbelievably depressing. A raid every night last week, and your father is nervy and most wearisome. He harps continually upon the possibilities of ruination, starvation, and the failure of the Firm. And I wish my threadbare patience were equal to the strain of his grumbling, badly-expressed, irritatingly forced optimism about you. I am downcast. Keep before you that this is my last letter, and bear if you can with the tedium of its reiterations and exaggerations.

During your life, Ivan, you have, I know, noticed some quality of trouble, of unrest, which permeates the atmosphere of your home. You have seen me dispirited and bored, your father annoyed and disappointed time and again; you must have guessed long ago that we were neither of us, in our different ways, happy. You may have considered and concluded, with every good reason in the world, that, since unhappiness is invariably the fault of a person, often solely due to one person, I may be to a great extent to blame.

It is not my intention, my dear Ivan, to make any attempt to excuse or exonerate myself; rather, in making now some effort to explain, I will leave the explanation, for you, if in justice you can, to make the excuses. The things I want to tell you must come in the order of their occurring to me, but recollections are seldom ordered, and defy arrangement. Well . . . there is this.

Your grandfather was a never particularly successful journalist. I believe I use the correct term; he wrote hungrily, unceasingly, everything that he could think of, not for choice indeed but simply because a guinea earned for a column of shoddy, second-rate insincerity meant an unbe-

lievable amount to a poor family. Your grandfather, Ivan, was a charming person. Can you see him from this: a slim slight figure, with restless unsatisfied eyes, and a mane of hair that he tossed back with the intolerant impatience of a young horse straining to be off and away; good-natured he was, and of that careless, easy disposition that begets a true but not specially heroic generosity and also now and then, pitiably seldom, 'twas said, clever. He may have been; genius is often unrecognized; there were certainly times when he could produce a thing after a sleepless night which made the few people we knew of any opinion look at him queerly. But however that may be, he lacked the common aptitude for turning a penny, and he had, besides your grandmother, Ivan, three children. Myself, the eldest, and two younger ones. Millstones, Ivan, there's no doubt about that, but he always said he could not possibly do without us. Your grandmother was the youngest daughter of some sort of naval officer. She had been poor enough before marrying, but the custom and usage of privation does not necessarily make it any the less irksome, and she suffered in our three noisy apartments, with their ceaseless obtrusion of bills, with the disgust of the most spoilt and pampered lady of lost wealth. She loved my father. Of so much I feel certain, though even by the time that I, the eldest, was of an age to observe such things, the love had been somewhat tempered down and disillusioned by the experiences of poverty. She was a gentle-looking, graceful sort of creature, beautiful in her youth. Somewhat emotional, with a decided upward trend towards high ideals. She never really lost the ideals, but I think they made her a trifle unsubstantial. With head in the clouds, she did so resent the obnoxious vicinity of the gutter. I think I can see her marrying poor, pleading papa, urged by the best motives about love in a cottage and the dinner of herbs; not the herbs she was forced to consume already, nor the cottage she then dwelt in, would have been able to get

romance out of mama. A bit unbalanced. Ah, Ivan, I daresay, comparing her with her daughter, you will readily perceive a fatal similarity. She had courage in plenty, and endurance, but her patience was an elusive thing, which she had to hold on to firmly, and then very often lost for a time. She taught herself to type, and was of real assistance to a man, who with the most industrious intentions, and an absolute appreciation of the bounden necessity of earning this sum or that to meet this bill or that, still had the unfortunate temperament that is able to concentrate on a book, blissfully regardless of the insistent scratching of the wolf at the door. Mama managed to keep him at things, and with her he worked and was grateful. Then she actually made a little herself, and once I remember transcribed a dictionary.

I used to fall asleep to the sound of her machine, and in the gray of the morning I would wake to see her sitting on my bed. And she would say softly, for fear of disturbing the children, as she rubbed the sleep from her tired eyes, 'Oh, Evie, I'm sick of it, I tell you, sick of it. And there's your father . . .' But then I never remember her saying more. She would stop, and sigh and laugh a little ruefully, and tell me to be quick and get up and see to the breakfast. She was so tired, and had been at it all night. Poor mama, she had an incredible amount to bear. Now and then she would flare out, and relapse into prolonged sulking, and my father would look up with bemused eyes, and stare at her in his unseeing way. Dear mama, she would have been the best of women on a thousand, nay even on five hundred a year. But a precarious two hundred sapped her resources, and I think, loving her as I do, that there were moments when she would have snatched at any chance to be gone. She did so hate it all.

A kindly relative used to descend from the heights of Kensington upon us at rare intervals, and she told my mother that I was being wasted. Mother quite agreed, and

was very glad of some kind invitations she extended to me to come to her sometimes on Sunday afternoons, to—as she put it, for she was that sort of person—'meet people.' I used to contrive dresses out of literally nothing, and I don't know what mama did not hope for from those tea-times. Well, I did meet people. Our relative had a comprehensive circle of friends. There were various sorts of artists, business people, and—though how this came about I have never been able to fathom—your father. I suppose I must have seen him four times when the relative called me aside one day as I was going, and, said she: 'My dear, you may have reason to thank me; for that Mr. Schenstein (and he's by no means poor, I can tell you), he . . . Well, you may have a chance of marrying him. And, my dear,' she added firmly, 'accept a little good advice—don't, I beg, be such a fool as to refuse him. Think what you'll be able to do for your mother.' For she was mother's relative, and very much inclined to blame papa for everything. Well, I won't go into it all now, Ivan. But so it turned out. He said, 'Little Miss Wood, why do you suppose I come here so often?' I think it was really very characteristic.

Now, my dear Ivan, I think I must have arrived at the crucial point of my narrative. The turning point of my life. The thing, in fine, that matters. My motive for doing what I did. I thought it all over as carefully as a girl of nineteen can, before I said a word to a soul.

I don't know how I managed to keep it to myself, but I was a trifle breathless, I daresay. To me there was something stupendous in this chance of marrying some one rich . . . unbelievable. I was, in a manner, too shy to mention it. But I considered it all with inexperience. Of course, in proportion, he was elderly. Though that, in itself, would not, I think, have worried me. Have you, Ivan, yet come across the type of girl who will have very little use for you? She who is born with a sort of so-

phistication, and can only really think in a matter of sex, in terms of much older men. Oh, nothing dreadful, I assure you, merely sophistication. Then I thought how, without doubt, I should be able to help, materially help, mama and papa who needed it so. But here, Ivan, high-flown as I know I was, I managed to preserve enough balance not to see myself in the sweet rôle of a fair martyr, sacrificing my beauty in the interests of my parents. Mr. Schenstein was to be no 'Auld Robin Gray.' But nevertheless, I was naturally influenced by the prospect of helping them. And then, Ivan, I was held, persuaded by the lure of money. It was natural, you may assert in indignant defense. Well, I'm not going to admit it. I had far less reason to worship wealth than many richer than I. Whatever the sordidness and scarcity of our home, I had been reared in the knowledge of much, and had learnt and knew that there are things besides which a carriage and furs fade and wither. We were Catholics, Ivan. Papa, in the somewhat careless manner of his kind. A trifle inclined to overlook Sunday Mass, and think it made all things well if he went to Benediction, and mama, with firm Faith and unswerving devotion, though she did have an unavoidable tendency to make passionate, impatient and slightly bitter Novenas for speedy relief, and we children had never thought of anything else. But mother in her calmer, more resigned moments could make God known to me with the insight of a mystic, and thus I learnt a very good sense of values, and how to be happy on apparently nothing. Therefore, with a live conscience and a knowledge of God, I should have been old enough to perceive what really mattered in the long run. And of course I did perceive. But at the same time, another powerful side of my nature hated poverty, as only one who has been brought up in it, not as a matter of birth and inevitable circumstance, but as an unfair, unfortunate imposition, caused by the evil machinations of chance, can hate it—(There, I

think, dear mama failed, she could never quite show us that to be poor was a gift from God) and I wanted passionately everything I had not got. I was, I know, of that vapid, effete mentality that finds a perverted glory in wanting, and stares spare time away into shop widows. Well, here suddenly I need no longer stare. I could have everything. My nature was not fine enough. The temptation was too great. I began to construct a fancy God of poor materials, and told myself that He, the all-merciful, would understand. I presumed on Divine generosity and persuaded myself, nearly at any rate, that allowances would be made for my state. There is nothing so fatal as a human conception of Mercy, made to fit temporary human circumstances. The longing for wealth was upon me, and I consented. But I knew the last time I went to Mass whether I knew I was wrong or not. I told them all at home, before I actually said yes, though I had made up my mind as to what I meant to do. Papa, irresponsible, and easily pleased, was delighted. He had always professed a liking for Jews; I don't think he could have had much in common, and we had a eulogy upon the merit, mystery, charm and history of their race. I was to be rich. That pleased papa. For the first time, as far as I can remember, he really noticed me. And he looked at me with pride. 'She'll make a *grande dame* in no time,' he exclaimed, 'she only wants a little good food to be perfect.' And then he remembered mother, and said I'd got it all from her. Poor darling mother, she couldn't say a word.

'I'm not sure yet what will happen,' I warned papa. 'I may find that I shall have to marry in a synagogue.' That sobered him a little, and it made mother cry. 'If marriage means forfeiting your Faith,' she sobbed, 'I know it's wrong.' But I was not going to have any of that, and I brought her round with promises to give everything up rather than my Faith. Mother looked at me as if she were at her wits' end, and then she cheered up, and

we went out and dined well at a little place papa knew of, on the strength of it.

But I don't know what we were all thinking of, Ivan. Then when I told your father my decision I must say he couldn't have been more fair. He reiterated what he had already said, that while he would always prefer that I should exercise my full liberty as regards my own private beliefs, I must nevertheless be fully prepared to sacrifice any little prejudices and preconceived notions that might in any way interfere with his. He prized me too greatly to want to be unreasonable, but I must see from the beginning that he was a Jew, and could not have his Jewish principles interfered with. In the event of a son, . . . but we left that, God knows why. I do believe that if I had come to understand that I was relinquishing not only my own Faith, but the heritage of Faith for my child, I should have come to my senses.

As it was, I hoped that things would turn out all right. Oh, I *was* an unprincipled, immoral girl, Ivan! May you never meet such another.

I haven't much more to say of my home-life. It was all so soon done with, and has been a memory so many years. The first thing of course was that your father told me with commendable candor, that he could not have my family for ever round my neck. But at the same time, he did not wish that they should suffer through losing me, indeed he was anxious to know that they were suitably provided for. Papa and mama would receive a very fair sum for keeping off. It wasn't quite what I had expected, though I might have known. I made passive acquiescence with the single reservation that I must see them all now and then. Your father very reasonably agreed. 'Now and then,' he stipulated. And I'd gone so far in a few weeks, Ivan, that there seemed no ground for demur. But I never got used to it, I can tell you.

Papa, I need scarcely say, did not mind at all. Not be-

cause he did not miss me, after his fashion. But he always saw the point with an impersonal lack of interest. He knew relations were a nuisance. All he cared for was that he and mama should be supplied with enough of what they wanted. Papa was never very unhappy for long. Mama accepted everything with stoical calm, but I saw from her face and the despairing fervor of her farewell embraces what she suffered. And I left her always straining for a last sight of me from the window. I had indeed been able to drive something of the anxious look that comes from uncertainty about the next shilling from her face, but only it seemed to bring a new kind of worry there instead. Mama knew I had married in a synagogue, and I know she never had a moment's peace. It didn't last long, however. Too much, or perhaps too little bread and butter had rendered mama oversusceptible to biting winds, she contracted a chill one autumn day, and was only ill for a week. Gallant always, she had really only lived to see the finish of the struggle, and I thanked God that I had been able to buy her that fur coat before she died, even if she must die despite it. 'You do always go to Mass?' she asked me towards the end. And I could not tell her then that already I didn't. She made a very good end. I remember the priest stared at me once or twice after hearing her confession. She must have told him about me.

I went down and comforted poor papa, bewildered and inconsolable. 'This is all because she married me,' he cried; 'she hadn't the constitution for a hard life. I wish I could die too!' But he got over it. I knew he would. He wrote dozens of odes to her memory. Many of them really beautiful and his 'In Memoriam' was once well known. Then he married again, and I never saw him. Your youthful uncle, Ivan, died in Matabeleland, in 1901. Your aunt is still alive, though I never see her. Thus ends my family. I have told you, dear, because I want to give you some idea of what prompted my marriage.

The next phase of my life was you. Bear with me if you can for a little longer. I'll try and make it as short as I am able.

Your father stood and looked at you in your cradle, studying you, planning already, I knew as I watched him, your life. He was more than pleased. A son was what he wanted. 'There's a family likeness,' he pronounced after a long scrutiny. You were a week old. I shuddered and craved God's mercy. Then I remembered that there more than probably was. Your being born made me think a lot, Ivan. I lay and looked at you and brooded, and I thought that since I knew more and more surely that I was wrong and that every day made me more wrong, I should leave. My marriage, according to my belief, was no marriage at all, therefore even at whatever cost to myself and to your father, I ought to go. But then I thought that if I went, I should without any question whatever have to leave you behind. And that leaving you, I should deprive you of any possible chance of knowing anything of the religion that was yours. I should not be there to save you from anything. And besides, you came just then after mama's death to fill such a great wide lonely void in my heart, you meant already so much to me that, always weak, I had not the courage to face the right thing and leave you, trusting in God's mercy for your safety. I decided that my only course was the working of evil that good might ensue, and I stayed, never again, having you, to think of going.

You were a quaint child, Ivan. I suppose I suffered as much worry and anxiety about you as do most mothers, and probably more than many. There were sides of your nature that filled me with delight, moods of very charming gentleness, imagination, mercy, and then you always, from the beginning, I know, loved me. But there were other sides, aspects I noticed as the years went by, that filled me with dread. You seemed to be endowed with such a strange, mixed, lawless notion of things like honor, charity, and just plain all-round goodness. I never knew such

a child for telling lies. Your resources for getting out of an awkward predicament were as infinite and marvelous as I think they are now. I remember I did my poor best to try and get it out of you. But you see, Ivan, the difficulty was that I must not talk to you in the only way that would have done any good. You learnt about God, and I believe you were in a way, very well instructed in some excellent principles of life, but the things that I would have you know, the things that I felt certain would have appealed to that other blessed side of your nature, I dared not tell you. Your father had made that most painstakingly plain. He meant to see that you were not given a strong Christian influence to counteract the Judaic, and, if I had told you of a certain God made Man who died for our sins, there would have been trouble. Had I ventured to tell you all the charming tales that most children hear and love, about the Baby in the Stable, and the poor Mother who laid Him in a manger, had I fed your imagination upon knowledge of Saint Francis and Saint Christopher, well, I doubt if I should have been allowed to have you at all. Your father had, I suppose, a very natural horror of what he classed largely as my 'beliefs.' Very well for me, but absolutely out of the question for you. And so you see, when I tried to show you the reason why it was wrong to tell lies and so on, I simply had no reason to give. You can't tell a child of seven that it must be good, simply because it is better all round to be good than bad, or because virtue is an essential to the carriage of worldly affairs. Children (at any rate I know you weren't) are not humanitarians. I could tell you nothing, and you, consequently, did pretty much as you liked. Your father spoilt you without wanting to at all, from the very first. Nothing, he felt, was too good for you and nothing was too good if it served to show your greatness as his son. But I remember the shock I had when you, having received on a birthday or some such occasion, a special mark of his favor,

actually could find it in your heart to laugh the next minute at him, when he had gone. The utter lack of principle appalled me. And yet I know you never laughed at me, I know you would have suffered anything always, simply to show how much you loved me. Extraordinarily complex? Well, what can you expect?

At school, of course, you went somewhat beyond my ken. I had to relinquish you then, and just at first I worried, wondering what on earth such as you would make of school life. I thought there must be a catastrophe. I didn't know you perfectly, Ivan. You seemed to get on very well. I wondered! then I realized how adaptable you were. So adaptable indeed that you even, I know, saw the necessity of giving up much of your nature. I don't think you told many lies at school, did you? only very seldom, perhaps, when you found it absolutely essential, and then so thoroughly and well, that they were as if untold. I think you perceived your atmosphere, and settled in immediately. I think you saw (how old were you, twelve, wasn't it?), yes, I think you saw, where and how you might, unless you were very careful, run the risk of being despised, and you managed so that far from being despised you left decidedly respected. No one, I know, Ivan, thought you a little theatrical, a trifle exaggerated, inclined to ostentation, rather bad form. No, because a really imaginative person, however greatly they may suffer interiorly, can always recognize how a thing must be done, and they can do it. You got speedily, perfectly, delightfully English, and your father used to return from seeing you with a puzzled, though not altogether displeased frown. Dear me, Ivan, I recollect well how I used tactfully to curb his anxiety that you should stand out amongst others, the wealthy son of a rich man. He wanted so badly to send you the most outrageous allowances, but I knew how embarrassing such luxuries can be.

They were queer times, your school days, but I never

found that they took you in spirit at all away from me. You assumed conventionality, Ivan, but you never, not in your most callous stage, became one scrap boorish. That was a great comfort. You left, a very finished, well-educated, suitably cultured person, of some renown. Of course, by this time, you'd given up all pretensions to Jewish belief. It may have been rather a pity. My experience has taught me that practically any religion, which has the least hold upon one, is better than nothing. But you certainly hadn't much. And quite what your father made of that, I can't say. He's as peculiar as you are, Ivan; he may have thought that after all, since you were a Jew, it did not greatly matter whether you felt inclined to give up much time to following your religion or not. That it was, at least in a sense, as he would have you. Independent, the young man of the world, rather *grand*. One cannot expect a person of over six feet to trouble particularly about such things. Especially a person who has had as much money spent on him as you had. Your father, Ivan, has an armor of philosophy to shield him from practically everything. Have you ever met a business man who did not moralize? Then you went into training-camp, and went away. That, Ivan, my dear, is to all intents and purposes the end of a chapter. Three years ago, and whatever or however you return will be something quite different. Or if you never return. . . ."

"Your father is wonderfully proud. Oh, he doesn't tell me so, neither does he keep his rooms scattered with your photos or anything like that. But it's in the air. And when the mail arrives, your letter doesn't get slit open and glanced through between mouthfuls of toast. No, it's taken carefully away, kept for a suitable moment for quiet, slow, enjoyable perusal. He counts it, as perhaps you know, Ivan, among the rarest, dearest things of life, yet I don't suppose you'd be able to tell that from the replies. Your

letters fill him with a kind of awe. They're so unlike any he ever wrote. He doesn't quite understand the funny talk about what you hope to get in on your next leave, and you send your love, and you'd like some more biscuits, but no more socks, all mixed up with a hint of blood and strange adventures. He doesn't quite understand it. But he's got a great respect for it, all the same. He's very anxious about you, I know that, because if you miss a mail or we hear of terrible losses, he's simply unbearable till you write. But, Ivan—and this is what I really want to say—when you come back your father will think after a little space has been decently allowed to elapse that it's time you settled down. He doesn't think any one is at all too young to settle down at about twenty-three. On the contrary, he thinks that's a very good age. And you'll find yourself soon faced with marriage. Ordinarily, I mean if you were his son, with a safer sort of mother, he might not worry you. But, he's afraid, as he always was, that you may try to live as he knows I would have you live. You're to go in the Firm, that goes without saying. But that's not enough. There's another side of you, the side he has to combat. The side that may lead you away, right away from him and the Firm and the family. His only hope is that he may persuade you to marry the right sort of woman. A Jewess of the type he would choose, then he knows that that worrying, incomprehensible side will be finished for ever. That side that is me. It will seem simple and easy enough to you, when the proposition is first raised, to laugh and assert with composed decision your independence. But he has power over you, Ivan, stronger than seems possible. You'll be in the Firm, that is, you will go there straight away, ostensibly to learn business and work your way up. What will really happen is that you'll just do nothing of any importance, and receive a handsome salary for wasting your time. There'll be a great show of getting on well, and I daresay, since your aim in life will be to one day

succeed to his position, what you do will be more than sufficient qualifications. But you will nevertheless be absolutely dependent upon the Firm, upon your father. That might not matter much, if you are content in your state, only that in this case it will, without question, mean doing largely exactly what you are told. In fact, you will be allowed a great deal of very pleasant and opulent liberty in return for an unconscious blind obedience.

And there will come the question of marrying. You, my dear Ivan, will find yourself faced with this alternative: 'Here's a very amiable and suitable young woman; I want to see you settled before I die, so that I know my money's quite safe. Well now, are you going to take her and be sensible or not? If not, you're exceedingly unobliging, get out and look after yourself.' Ivan, it's positively amazing how much more formidable that alternative always is than it seems beforehand. Bear in mind that you've no training, no career at your back. Natural aptitude, any sort of brilliancy is not enough. As you count money, you could earn nothing, and there, all ready and comfortable, is your settled income, your assured prospects, an easy life. All for a small matter of marrying the person put forward. And remember yours is a luxurious, easy-going temperament. Ivan, unless you think seriously, unless you know something of the other side, I do not see how you will be able to avoid falling in with every plan. Now comes what I want you so much to think seriously about—the other side, that I want you to see. As I have tried to explain, all your life I have done everything I could to make you rather like myself.

Not actually myself, as a weak enough creature of many follies and countless failings. God forbid! But I have striven to bring out my strain in you. You're only half a Jew, and I have tried so hard to foster that other half. When you were a few weeks old, I carried out a determination I had had for months and took you to a Church

to be baptized. It may not convey much to you, but to me that means that you are a Christian. And that, your Christianity is what I have fought for. And that—oh, for words, for eloquence to make you see it—is so exactly what will perish, perhaps for all eternity, if you marry a Jewess. It means nothing to you, my dear, but it means everything in life to me. And so, I beg, in this my last letter, that you stand guard, that at whatever cost, you do not do as you will be certainly be asked to. I am not asking you to give up any one you love, indeed, if I thought that she who is to be placed in your way for a wife, were to be pleasing to you, were to be one you could love, then I would be silent, though to know that you loved and were content with such a one, would, I think, break my heart, but there is no question of that. If you married in this way, it would be because you thought it the easiest thing to do; so knowing it cannot hurt you, I make my appeal.

For the sake of my notions of salvation, however strange and mistaken they may appear to you, consider me, when the time comes for decision.

I know that in the end, no matter how angry he were, if you were but obdurate long enough, your father would never drive you to the extreme of disinheritance. He is far too fond of you for that. But he'll move every possible stone to get his way, and you won't know what he may not do. So remember; I know I can trust you. I will say no more."

She had left off here. Had said what was upon her mind, and stopped, ardor exhausted. Put it all away, these sheets upon which she must have placed so much reliance, built so much hope, and gone downstairs.

Ivan let them drop, the while he stared out at the passing countryside that spun round, field by field, hedgerow by hedgerow, and was whirled away. He had left her behind him, but not that part of her which mattered—her

power. That influence, so gentle yet so insistent all his life, could not die. Her voice had sunk to a feeble whisper, faded and died with her breathing, and lo! here it was with him still. Coming alive once more from this old letter, written so long ago. Her thoughts, her fears, her hopes, all she had nursed, silent and still throughout the years, stirred with life as he drew them from the page.

"For the sake of my ideas of salvation, however strange and mistaken they may appear to you." "Salvation, Ivan," he could hear her saying it. "We're all dying here with all this finery. Go to the Weinhers, see them living, watch them take their pleasures, hear them quarrel, listen to your father's talk about the Firm. Dying by inches, I tell you. Oh, don't you die too." Salvation. Just as she had cried for the priest when she lay so ill, and sighed with satisfaction afterwards, murmuring calmly, "I am saved." Salvation. A word, preeminently her own.

But what she must have suffered! This, written right back in 1917, and since then she had seen so much and said so little. Had borne all this Sadie business and only spoken once. She had said at the beginning she might tear it all up. She hadn't meant to, he felt sure, with the first warm lines that were to go to prove the substance of her certainties. And she had kept it all this time. When they lunched together that day there had been this waiting, the full account. Why had she never told him about the baptism? That must have cheered her up sometimes. Ivan turned back to the letter. There was more. She had resumed, when that mood came again upon her. The next part had a new date. "April 1918." Some months had elapsed.

"I took this out again to-day; I'd almost forgotten it. I don't know whether it can do with any finishing off. Your last letter was very sweet. Of course I didn't mind about your being away so much last time you were at home.

Your leaves are, shall I say, epochs in my life, but I love to think you are getting the full benefit of them. Three days out of a week was a lot for me, I think. I am still half inclined to destroy this muddled manuscript. I can't imagine what you will make of such an extraordinary rigmarole. You do seem to have a lot to put up with from your parents.

Everything seems to become more and more depressing, though we've had far fewer raids. Oh, Ivan, my dear, it's at night I think of you most. Daytime is always busy in some way, but at night! When it rains I think of you in that dreadful mud, and when it's fine with a moon I think of you being killed because it's so light. And last night, I kept imagining you, horribly wounded, and thirsty, and not quite dead, with no one near. I often feel that that will be the crown of my well-deserved retribution, to lose you. I do wish you were back for good. No more now."

Another page, and another date, after the Armistice.

"This is evolving into something of a journal. I hope you'll forgive me. It's so peaceful to feel that you're safe at last and unhurt. But my peace was disturbed somewhat last night, your father made mention of plans for your future. Nothing very definite, but I can see I was right. And though it seems too utterly grotesque to contemplate for a moment, I believe it's actually Sadie Weinher he has in mind. Though, really, I think I might very well have guessed. What could be more suitable or convenient or characteristic? 'She's grown,' he observed, 'a fine figure of a woman. Sort of girl I wouldn't mind seeing Ivan have. Make an excellent wife.' I nearly screamed. Then I recovered myself. 'His tastes,' I said smoothly, 'may have changed with the passing of experience, but I remember he used not to care much for her type.' 'Fin-

icky,' he growled. 'There's nothing wrong with her type.' I quite agreed. There isn't as a type.

Oh, dear! I do hope there's nothing in it. She's got money of her own, it seems now so terribly likely."

Ivan smiled. Poor Mama, what a fear to haunt one! The next entry was undated.

"I have come to regard this as a sort of refuge. Something to fly to. You are away, Ivan. You've been away a good deal now. I'm afraid your father is getting restless. He speaks continually of the splendid place ready for you at the office. Says it's high time you started to settle down to steady work. Of that I say nothing. I never judge you, Ivan. Then he goes on: 'Best thing he could do would be to find some nice girl and get married.' There is something, some quality about this monotonous nice girl, which drives me to the point of desperation. I have so little patience. I suppose it's because I can visualize the nice girl. I can count at least five families, upon all of whom your father is casting a match-making eye. And first and foremost the Weinhers. How can he expect it of you! I wonder what makes him so old-fashioned?"

Once more Ivan let the papers fall, and he looked out at the rush of country with musing, unseeing eyes. It was getting more difficult to read now. The first part had seemed less near, less familiar. But these brief light sentences made her voice simply leap off the page. So had she spoken to him, so had they laughed together, only a few weeks ago. And this was her real self. Not the wearied, drooping woman of dinner-times, and those depressing drawing-room evenings. Not the woman who yawned away an hour with his father, and half audibly thanked God as she went upstairs to bed. This was his own mother. Clever and interesting, and good-humored as she had always been to him. Yet withal with a certain

stately charm that marked her conversation as a graceful tune measures a gavotte. Despite the sting of the memories, he could not resist reading.

In January, 1920, she had repaired to her journal again.

"A great trial I always find Christmas time. Something quite unique in the way of trials. Very strange how religiously we observe the festival. Though since for us it is all absolutely pointless, the rejoicings seem somewhat barren to me at any rate. Why, for instance, do the Weinhers think fit to give a party just then? A party, moreover, to which for some reason I am invariably specially invited, and to which for some equally obscure reason I am bound to go. Of course, it is true, every one is at home, with plenty of time on their hands, and they may be merely keeping a great public holiday, but still it seems peculiar. For when one considers the question, any Bank Holiday is public, yet the cultivated circle among which I move has all cultivation's conventional contempt for Bank Holiday. Even Mrs. Weinher thinks that terrible Monday in August rather vulgar. But Christmas! It makes them rejoice, and makes *me* feel so tired. How wise you are to go away at such times, Ivan. Not that I couldn't enter fully into the spirit of Christmas, once upon a time; I never minded it when I used to take you about as a child, to see the shops all decorated in Oxford Street. I never minded it when dear papa used to spend the money we had managed to save for the gas bill upon what he called 'a bird,' and used to buy himself those poems he wanted as a present from mama. There was Midnight Mass in those days. I never minded it then. . . .

But now, as I say, all the excitement seems just a little barren, but I daresay that's merely that I've lost my *joie de vivre;* no more. No further allusions to the great Sadie project lately. If only—forlorn hope—that could blow over. But I scarcely think it's likely."

There were a few entries through the summer. She had been away.

"Scotland, my dear Ivan. How I wish I had not gone! Scotland demands a very particular temperament. It always depresses me." Then there had been some sort of scene with his father. "Your father, my dear Ivan, is getting worse and worse. I left the table last night. There is a limit beyond which one cannot go. He hinted that you would work harder and generally take life more seriously if you saw less of me. I asked for an explanation. But he only shook his head darkly and would say no more. I forbore to press the point. Of course he's entirely right. I hope indeed to be able to persuade you from taking life seriously in his conception of the term. Dear me, Ivan. It is a terrible tangle."

Then she had not been well. "It is now certain that I have a very weak heart, Ivan. I told your father, and he said something about 'He knew I should overdo it one day.' As a matter of fact I never do anything. Of course he can't help rather wishing I would die. I have been on the sofa by the window for a fortnight. Time hung so exceptionally heavy that I took up the study of psychoanalysis. It sounds most interesting, but I think I should be a little afraid of the hold it might get over me. But I am sure a great deal of it's very true. Perhaps its truth is its danger. Like Spiritualism, you know. I simply consume biographies and autobiographies. That is surely indicative of a certain type of mentality. This morbid pleasure in the lives of others. This dwelling upon past tragedy. Your father picked up *Louise de la Vallière,* a day or two ago. He gave it a perfunctory glance, then became rather more interested, finally engrossed. I watched him fascinated. At last he threw it down and said with a little snort, 'Let the dead past bury its dead. Silly nonsense I

call it, raking up somebody else's old love affair. Don't mean to say it interests you?' "

She had laid it aside for months then, till again, four months ago, came a rush of writing.

"The Sadie plot thickens horribly. But I have a ray of hope. Staying (and I think this is rather ironical) with the Weinhers, is a girl, Anne. She came to tea with Sadie to-day. I must write. Now let me collect my rather scattered senses, and view the whole matter with their aid. I hope I have enough balance to see that I cannot blame your father for wanting to arrange your life, if I want to do precisely the same thing myself. But, let me think a moment. No, I don't. I want to leave you entirely free to do as you like. I don't want you to be fettered by suggestions of Sadie, and I wouldn't thrust Anne Hurst upon you, even if I could do so. But she does happen to be the first girl I have seen whom I would like to know you could care about. I think, knowing you and that you do possess rather a taste for the rare and exquisite, and that you endeavor to cultivate one too, I think then, that you might, so long as you are not in any way persuaded, consider her lovely enough to love.

I know you love golden hair, Ivan. I believe you think gray eyes very beautiful, and a smooth white face, and an expression with just a suggestion of sorrow in it, and a way of breaking all up with a pleasant, consequential, pleased smile. She has charm. There is a hint of Romney about her, Perdita's dignity or even the Parson's Daughter. But really, there is much more of Botticelli in her fair serenity. She's got that gravity. Your father seems to think she can't do much harm beside Sadie. I suppose I'm too much inclined to rhapsodize, but to me this visitation means everything.

I should be so content if I knew you saw in her what

I see. She is a Catholic. Ivan, you remember what I wrote a few pages back about Salvation. But I ought not to say such things to you. I only hope that by the time you read all this you may already care for her too much to be put off by my importunities."

Ivan stared a long time out of the window. The afternoon on the heath came to his mind. "Care for her too much." Ah, but she had not foreseen what it might be like. She had imagined he had but to care, as he had thought, that to care was enough. Had she but known that by the time he read this he would have cared, and found caring amounted to nothing! What would she have had then to write to him? Ivan stared out, considering what pathos lay in the failure of caring. It had come about as she had hardly dared to hope. And yet her hopes were dashed to the ground. But then she must have known how it would be. That for him to want Anne did not mean that he might have her; or perhaps, like him, she had not known that Anne could be so obstinate. But, Ivan wondered, would she, with all that talk about her sin and her regrets, want Anne to marry him very much in the same way as she had married his father? And if not, upon what foundations did she base her hopes of his ever being able to marry Anne? There was nothing he could do. He had offered Anne everything he could: love, perfect freedom to follow whatever Faith she cared for, a guarantee of no interference on his part. What, thought Ivan, looking moodily down at the papers on his knee, more could he do? It hadn't been enough for Anne. She, Anne, Ivan reflected, had made his mother's hopes impossible by her immovability. She had been, though he loved her none the less for it, too exacting. No one ever gives up everything for marriage, it's always a matter for half and half. Did she see that, his mother, and sympathize with his inability to do more?

But if to Anne her religion meant as much as it evidently had to his mother, if she counted it honestly and avowedly above even himself, she could not then be unreasonable in considering its claims even greater than his own. His mother said she had once not considered those inexorable, insistent claims, and that she had never been peaceful for a moment since.

Anne, then, perhaps felt the importance of considering them. No, he could not blame her. It was really a matter of circumstance. Unjust fate, and a narrow-minded father, had placed him in a hopeless position. And love, faced with deprivation, does not die, but has, perforce, to retire for a time. Love had been sacrificed before now on the altar of grim necessity. Ivan, filled with a certain gloomy comfort in thus being able to fit a fairly convincing explanation, took up the letter again and resumed. . . .

"Importunities," he read on, "I gave her a rosary, dear girl, when she came. I simply couldn't resist the temptation, seeing, suddenly as I did, that she was a Catholic. How I should love to see her saying it!

April 19. It is wonderful to stand by and watch the slow attainment of my desire. Dear Ivan, your father is enchanted. You go frequently to the Weinhers'. He is puzzled at your change of front, but pleased. He thinks, I believe, without any doubt, that you must be falling in with the Sadie scheme. The possibility of any other issue has not, I feel certain, occurred to him. Strange how credulous, how easily misled, how gullible is even the wiliest of experienced human understandings.

Of course, he rules Anne out altogether. How is it that he never, never even begins to understand his own son? He always concludes that you must in all essentials be like himself. And you, my dear Ivan, are in love with Anne. I am so very glad. I haven't said one word. I wouldn't for anything, I am far too fearful of affronting you. . . .

But the beautiful part of it all is, that, rather like your father, you have that power of living in happy ignorance. I do believe you think nothing whatever has reached my perceptions.

I love that in you, Ivan. Such sublime, self-centered absorption. You took her out to dinner last night. You came in rather earlier than usual, which tallies with the necessity of getting her back at an expedient hour to suit the Weinhers; then you came upstairs very quietly, and this morning you were—well, positively benign. And what, I long to know, do the Weinhers, astute as a family, think of it all? Of course, Anne would no doubt tell them of a friend, old, preferably of her father's, whom she had met, and who had invited her out for the evening, but they must surely see through that. Or do they, like your father, take your suddenly frequent visits as little compliments to Sadie?

Possibly they do. For, needless to say, you are particularly nice to Sadie, when you go there. If Sadie falls in love with you over your visits to Anne, it will be a sad tragedy. You will come very near to marrying her then, Ivan. Everything will press so. Let us only hope, however, that Sadie, perhaps a trifle misunderstood, keeps her head from being turned. I think she understands the position with regard to Anne. Sadie has her intelligence on points. You look very charming in love, Ivan.

So you've never been in love before. I take it the summer of 1919 was an adventure, then. No, I know you didn't think I knew about that, either, did you? But I can always tell, Ivan. Something in your expression, and you always seem to eat so well at such times. Oh, Ivan, my dear, you really are rather sweet." (Ivan smiled slightly. Extraordinary woman she had been. She put style even into her devotion to him. Her passion was innately well-bred. "In case I offend," she would have told him gravely, "I should hate to make you feel in any way

awkward. Love's a thing too rare and delicate to be continually thrust in the face.") Then after that lunch she wrote, "I had a long talk with you a few days ago, Ivan. I think I was fairly happy with what you said. I see you fully share my ideas concerning the match with Sadie Weinher, if for somewhat different reasons. And now that you have Anne, I believe you are safe.

After I said good-by to you, I met Anne. We went together into that convent by Marble Arch. The first time for years I've been anywhere of the kind. How it all came back to me! I don't know how I came to go in. But she said she was going, and suggested my coming too. It was interesting, she said. I felt then, what she subsequently told me, that she guessed about me; perhaps the feeling led me to follow. Anyway, I went into that Chapel, as if it were my practise to make a visit every time I passed by. I, who have never even been to High Mass at St. Peter's for fear of my uneasy conscience! I cannot write of what I felt and thought about it, not even to you, Ivan, but I found it very peaceful. Very curiously it did not seem so much to drive my guilt home to me, as to smooth it away. I was grateful to Anne. When we came out we walked in the Park and talked together. I can only say that the whole afternoon made the greatest impression upon me. I should almost suppose it to herald a rapidly approaching conclusion. I am not strong, and to have been allowed to go in there seems like one gracious consolation, a whisper that I shall not be judged too harshly. I am superstitious by nature like all rather weak-minded people. To have knelt once more before the Blessed Sacrament seems like a sign of the end."

There was only one more entry and that of four weeks ago.

"I have been really ill this time: Influenza. It has taken toll of my heart, I fear. I thought that I had been

right, and that death was upon me at last. But apparently that is not to be. I am vastly better now, though my desire to live has not been particularly great. Something more than the fever of a mere chill has fired my brain. A new worry has come upon me. I am obsessed with a great fear. The peace of my late hopes has been taken from me. Justly. For I well realize I am undeserving of peace. Peace is the privilege of the virtuous, so the hope I cherished has faded. I have had this, to lie considering, during the past three weeks; such depression was scarcely conducive to a speedy recovery. I am aware of a change, Ivan. There is a difference in you. You would deny it on the ground that anxiety has made me over-critical, and debility exaggerated my naturally morbid outlook, but morbidity, though it exaggerates, rarely lies completely, it is a sensibility over-sensitive, a seismograph recording the subtlest disturbances. I know something has happened, I can guess, I almost know for certain, what is concerned. You are gloomy, disinterested, hard-eyed, and a short while ago, you were happy and in love. Anne called in to say good-by a day or two before I fell ill, she was strictly impersonal, with a decided suggestion of being on her guard.

Her farewell was pathetic in its brevity, and her mouth was tired. I cannot perfectly conceive what hitch can have occurred. One dreadfully possible explanation does come to me that you, while caring, cannot summon the resolution, the courage, to give up as you may have to, your position in the Firm. It is a lot to ask of you, Ivan; I do not blame you for not feeling equal to it, but Anne would be bound to exact certain conditions, and you, acceding to her, would collide seriously with your father, even supposing you persuaded him to agree to the primary matter of marrying a Christian, a somewhat difficult feat, I know well. If this is the trouble, you are feeling angry with Anne and, even a more nerve-racking passion, angry

with yourself. You are in a quandary between love of Anne and circumstantial ties to the Firm, your father. Oh, Ivan, these are the troubles I laid in store for my son, when I married.

You seem rather more cheerful. To me you have the contentment of resignation. Can you be so greatly lacking in trust and hope and resolution as to have decided that your position in life has been assigned you? Will you soon settle down into a despair of immutability? I fear I am becoming somewhat involved, but depression always makes me heavy in my composition.

Whatever you are, Ivan, hypocrite, coward, wastrel; and darling, *darling*, I know you are not any of them, but whatever you are is the fault of your upbringing, and your environment of hypocrisy and cheating. I refer, needless to say, to myself.

I am to go away. Your father is more than willing. He goes too, but not with me, thank God. Of his own accord he suggested your accompanying me. I fancy he was a little disturbed about me this time. He may not exactly want me to live for ever, but he does want a perfectly clear conscience if I die. There is nothing your father hates and fears so much as self-reproach. It is so foreign to his nature. Well, well, I must try and give him no cause for such a thing. I don't think he need have. He has always been extraordinarily good to me.

He intends to spend a very profitable holiday. Business with pleasure. The slogan of every true Schenstein. Amongst other things he will arrange the financial side of your marriage into the Weinher family.

When he and you return, you will be faced with the alternative I have predicted. I have said all I have to say, Ivan, over and over again. You know my wishes and the reasons for them. I look forward to a little while alone with you. It will be very pleasant to think that for once we are both removed from family affairs.

Dear Ivan, almost unconsciously I draw this long epistle to a close. I shall not, I think, reopen it.

But, begging your forgiveness for its tedium, and thanking you for your patience in its perusal, I bring it to a belated conclusion."

CHAPTER XIV

THE GRACES OF A MEAL

MR. SCHENSTEIN knew well that for the proper indulgence in grief, a meal, and that of a type suitable to the occasion, is absolutely necessary. Sorrow at a bereavement, he knew, cannot in decency be coaxed or cajoled or comforted away; sorrow is inevitable and must be allowed its freedom, but, that emotion may be directed into safe channels, may be, not checked but rather assisted, something, not heavy, light yet not too unsubstantial, is essential. He was waiting for Ivan on the platform, and hurried him immediately to the repast the preparation of which he had ordered against their arrival at the hotel. Mr. Schenstein felt, deep within him, that if only Ivan might be persuaded to partake of a little clear soup, and perhaps something in the way of chicken, savory, though not indecently so, and a glass of just that wine, befitting a somber passion, his woe untampered with, would fade imperceptibly and gradually into a safe sense of loss. Mr. Schenstein himself, on his own occasions of real misery, as when a deal had failed, or a coup fallen through, always flew to the infinite sustainment of nourishment as some comfort. And this, he took it, was not the greed of the gourmand, rather the refined appreciation of the well-balanced mind, the sane understanding of food and its uses.

"You've had a rush journey," he remarked in the taxi, "I can see you're feeling the strain."

Ivan nodded, as if he were very tired indeed. Too tired even to answer.

"Yes." Mr. Schenstein looked at him with the satisfaction of sympathy. "I hurried too. I came straight here, of course. It was the only thing to do."

Ivan nodded again.

"Very tiring," said Mr. Schenstein, and glanced again and relapsed into silence. He felt faintly nervous. There was something stern, unmistakably unbending in Ivan's set face. Pathetically Mr. Schenstein wondered wherein lay his guilt. But nothing, not even that somewhat overcautious first cable in code, occurred to him as grounds for this disconcerting austerity.

After all it had been perfectly true. He could not, at that moment, have come on receipt of the news. Not unless, of course, he had known how bad she really was. She had so often been bad, he was not to know it was serious at last. If Mr. Schenstein, staring at his son's side-turned, undisturbed countenance, sought to justify his conduct, it was not that he saw himself in the wrong. Only, if Ivan considered him so, then Mr. Schenstein, albeit he preserved a front decided and unmoved, would, as a concession to his veneration for that important being's important opinion, make excuses.

After all it had been true. He could not have left. And what would Ivan have, anyway?

At table in the room Mr. Schenstein had engaged for their exclusive use, it was the same. They faced each other awaiting the meal. Ivan, tipping back his chair, eyed the cloth moodily, and Mr. Schenstein still watched him and, a trifle confused, reviewed sentences that might shatter the silence, and could not venture with one. He felt hurt, and therefore, of course, angry, but beyond that he was filled with the strange, subconscious reverence that, in the company of his son, he could never, being almost unaware of its presence, shake off.

"She was not fit for the journey," he started at last.

"She shouldn't have gone really. But she would go."

Ivan looked steadily down.

"I did try to persuade her against it," Mr. Schenstein tried again, "I told her to wait a bit longer and get stronger, but she meant to go then."

Ivan looked up.

"Yes," he said.

Mr. Schenstein shook his head sententiously.

"She oughtn't to have done it," he said.

"No."

"It was too far. I . . ." Mr. Schenstein broke off, "Ah, here's lunch." He waited, regarding the arranging of the food, dealt severely with the matter of the wine-list, took up his spoon, and, with the first mouthful, went on:

"I was shocked, dreadfully shocked. I couldn't believe it. She'd been ill so often, it didn't seem . . ."

"Yes," Ivan suddenly roused, began on his soup.

Food, fare, sustenance, whatever circumstance terms it, is a wonderful provision of Providence, a fulfilling of a need, artistic in its adequacy. Besides all its other estimable qualities, it possesses the supreme advantage of being an intrinsic occupation, worthy therefore of mind and body. Mr. Schenstein, with something so definite to do, regained his assurance and self-respect. "It's no good saying anything," he said, "no good at all. It's a thing that can only be got used to. Of course, there are no consolations, but when one thinks it had to come some day—looked at in that light . . ."

"If," said Ivan angrily, "I could have broken it to you in any other way I would have. It must have been a terrible shock to you. I was really afraid to let you know so abruptly, but of course, I knew, however great the blow, you would rather know at once."

"Yes. But it's no good giving way," said Mr. Schenstein mildly. "One feels it, needless to say, but it's no

good making ourselves ill." He stopped and added, "It's no use."

Ivan applied himself to his plate with fierce brows. "I wasn't making myself ill," he said.

Mr. Schenstein looked up. "No, I know. I only said that as much to remind myself as you," he reproved him patiently.

"Ah," Ivan glanced a disinterested apology. "I see."

"You say you wound everything up all right out there?" Mr. Schenstein asked after a time.

Ivan nodded. "Yes."

"What were your doctors?"

"A little French chap in the village. And I wired a specialist."

"Did he come in time?"

"Just."

"Sudden," observed Mr. Schenstein, pushing aside his plate. "That's always the way with the heart. Did you get a nurse?"

Ivan looked at him, full of a sudden intention.

"The nurse arrived too late," he replied. "She had the priest."

The hand that crumbled Mr. Schenstein's bread was arrested for a second as he stared.

"Ah," he said in interested tones. "That so? Ah, yes."

Ivan fixed him with a piercing gaze.

"I'd no idea she was a Catholic," he said.

Mr. Schenstein looked away as the next course was brought in.

"No?" he said casually. "No? I suppose she wanted to keep it dark. . . . Yes, I believe she was. She gave it all up long ago. But of course it would come back to her when she was dying. Only natural, really. So she had the priest, did she?"

They were alone again and Ivan said, "Yes. She wanted to have him very much, I could see that."

Mr. Schenstein looked at him as if fascinated, but only for a moment, then he began to eat.

Ivan delicately took a little.

The silence was oppressive.

"Well, I'm glad it's all settled." Mr. Schenstein looked up wiping his lips. "Funeral, bills, nothing outstanding to be seen to? What about that priest? Was he satisfied?"

"I gave a donation to the Church," said Ivan.

"That's right. Well, I must say I'm glad that's settled."

"I thought you would be."

Mr. Schenstein, struck by the tone, said rather anxiously, "You mustn't think I'm not feeling this. I don't want you to think I'm not deeply, very deeply moved. Of course I am."

"Of course you are," agreed Ivan.

Mr. Schenstein laid down his fork.

"I am," he said. "Perhaps I can't show my feelings enough. But I am very—grieved. Very grieved indeed. But I still must say I think it's just at these times it's most essential to bear up, and not let it crush you."

"That's the only sensible point of view," nodded Ivan.

Mr. Schenstein looked down again, still unsatisfied. "I want you to realize I mean it," he went on, looking up again.

Ivan, overwrought, exclaimed tempestuously:

"Mean it! Of course you mean it! What do you think? I don't believe you? Mean it! Naturally you mean it! Why, I tell you it means more to me . . ." he stopped and dropped his eyes.

"Of course, I know." Mr. Schenstein spoke quietly.

But to Ivan's bruised sensibilities his voice only conveyed a suggestion of smug and comfortable condolence, as one who would say, "Yes, yes, I know just how it is." "Damn

him," Ivan most unreasonably cried within his soul. "This is what killed her. I see it now." He composed his expression into a look of tremendous calm and resolution, sipped his wine and stared with folded arms into space.

"I owe you a good deal," Mr. Schenstein remarked. And whether he meant morally, sentimentally or practically is a question concerning his own character. Ivan, knowing his father, took him literally and made no reply. "A cigar?" suggested Mr. Schenstein. "Come, it'll do you good. These aren't my wretched things. No?" He lit one himself and leant back, expelling the first breath.

"I must say you got it all through pretty quickly," he said in commending tones. "You weren't long."

"There was no reason for delay," said Ivan.

"And besides," began Mr. Schenstein, "hot out there, of course. I mean, better to get it done quickly. Quite right."

Ivan regarded him. "What *do* you mean?"

"Dead best buried quickly," muttered Mr. Schenstein behind his cigar, and became lost in contemplation.

Ivan positively closed his eyes.

He thought, as he smoked a cigarette, how he was seeing his father now in all his reality. That this must be the sum-up of his outlook, his attitude towards fundamentals. He was no doubt thinking that it was a pity, a great pity to lose a wife, it was such a pity to lose anything, but it might be worse of course. He didn't, Ivan felt certain, really care at all. Hardly—so utterly unromantic had been their relationship—could he be touched by the least softening stir of sentiment.

She had been just something he had got hold of, picked up cheap. A thing that had served its time. And though you may not care to feel that even a thing is lost, still no one in a proper state of mind will waste pining over a thing. "He's trying to display some sort of make-shift sense of loss just to propitiate me because, though he can't

himself understand the attraction, he knows I cared for her. And this is my father!" Ivan fell to considering with a new sort of poignant realization, what must have been his mother's life with this person who could offend so greatly. What had been that enduring distaste, the impression of which he had borne from his earliest recollections? A sort of shamed repulsion too near and horribly real to be mentioned. He could feel now, in his affront and resentment, what manner of thraldom had chafed her eager spirit, and perceive with what ache of longing she must at death have turned to some fine, uplifting, saving influence, to redeem her wretched soul from its degradation.

Seeing his father, with his black tie, and his expression of nothing whatever but sleep, a kind of springing dislike rooted and grew up in his heart. He felt he could not bear him, and the meal, and the room, and the stupid, hopeless atmosphere of it all. "It's all him," he thought fiercely. "Only he could make things like this, with food, and a beastly vulgar hotel sitting-room!"

Mr. Schenstein, smoking, and reaching for his glass, and smoking again, had reflections unlike his son's conceptions of them. He was not thinking with any special regret of his wife's death, for he was scarcely thinking of her as dead at all. What he remarked and considered was that Ivan so greatly resembled her. He seemed to have assumed something very familiar that she had cast off and left for him to wear. Her manner, her attitude with regard to himself, Ivan had now perfectly. The contempt, the petulance, the impersonal disregard, all that he had grown accustomed to in her, he noticed, suddenly marked, in her son. And it was her silent defiance all over again. "If you imagine that because she's dead I'm any the more your son, you're much mistaken. On the contrary, you now perceive her identically in me, for your benefit." Ivan was feeling about him as she had felt—Mr. Schenstein

knew it well—and his very face bore her insolent, wearied expression. The knowledge sank into him, "If there were to be more trouble . . . he must learn that the time had gone past for that." But despite all he knew so well, Mr. Schenstein could not yet believe that there would be more trouble. Things must change now.

"I've been very busy," he remarked. "What with Germany, Hamburg, you know, and I went to Berlin, Holland, Amsterdam, and then I was in Breslau for a day or two, and Warsaw; I did a lot of business in Warsaw. I can tell you I haven't wasted time. But I've done some good work though. I don't regret going. There was one . . . you remember . . ." he went into business details. "So I talked them round," he concluded. "That's a very good connection. They're worth trouble. I made a lot of inquiries, and I can tell you I'm quite satisfied."

"Splendid," said Ivan.

"And then, of course—well, I stayed on to see it settled," continued Mr. Schenstein. "But after getting your cable, I couldn't concentrate so well. I left it and came away."

"Only thing to do," agreed Ivan, flicking ash into the tray. He turned his chair to the window and stared out unresponsively.

Mr. Schenstein, cutting a cigar with great absorption in his occupation, glanced up for one keen, acute second and down again.

There was a long silence. Then Mr. Schenstein, cigar between his teeth, suddenly asked:

"She didn't leave any message for me, I suppose?"

Ivan, deep in thought, looked round.

"Eh?"

"She, your mother, didn't say anything about—didn't leave any message for me, I suppose?"

Ivan was silent, thinking hard. He cast his mind back in vain, then remembered something.

"She was practically unconscious towards the end," he answered. "But she said . . ." he paused, "she said . . . well, you may as well have the exact words. She said, 'You may as well say good-by for me, Ivan.' "

"Nothing more?" queried Mr. Schenstein with interest.

Ivan shook his head.

"Nothing more."

Mr. Schenstein went on smoking. He looked thoughtful.

He smoked like that, quietly, reflectively, steadily, for a long time, then he moved.

"Well, we're standing on our own now, Ivan, you and I, the two big members of the family."

Ivan, with his gaze outside, nodded.

"Why now?" he asked.

"We're alone in the world," Mr. Schenstein reminded him with some austerity.

"Oh, yes," Ivan assented, somewhat at a loss.

"We've lost a lot very suddenly."

Ivan stared dumbly, utterly taken aback.

"We've lost a great deal, and now we must think how she would want us to be—to be to each other, what her going has deprived us of."

He was so perfectly serious, and his eyes, resting on his son, were so absolutely frank and earnest that Ivan, unprepared, knew him to be awaiting a suitable rejoinder, and could find nothing out of which to manufacture any sort of adequate reply. . . . He could but return that solemn, misty gaze and wonder at it, and whether his mother had been aware of this side, and if so, why she had never thought to inform him of it.

"Is this sincerity?" he asked himself, amazed. And decided it could not be.

But Mr. Schenstein was perfectly sincere. Now that his wife was safely and fairly satisfactorily dead, he really did feel oppressed with a sentimental sense of affliction.

Touched. The drama of the situation was borne in upon him, and could not fail to make its own appeal. She, the lovely, delicate, faded woman, who, poor mistaken creature, had led him such an unpleasant existence during her life, now dead, gone for ever. It seemed sad, illustrative of the sorrow and tragedy of poor, afflicted, helpless mortality.

"We've all got to go some day." A moral to be applied with all the lowering, chastening effects of pathos. And then, he was otherwise a little disturbed. To desire another's death is to murder in spirit. To bewail the desire satisfied, most grotesque hypocrisy. Mr. Schenstein thought deep enough to be uneasily aware of this, and—murder Evelyn, never! To kill is cheap, unworthy revenge. And the ensuing self-reproach must be sorrow, remorse, not bewailing. Granted he had wanted her to die, then let him be sorry, but without cant of mourning. And those who are left, he and his son . . . well, wherever she was, she must certainly feel sorry for all she had done, she would want them to close up over her vacant place. And she would not, perhaps, bear him malice, would forgive that wish that she might die. Real enough for any little worldly business man, was that half-trust in the glorified generosity of the dead.

And then it did seem to him proper that at such a time he should say a few words to his son. "He too, has not been all he should have been to me, by any means," he reflected. "That was her influence, but now . . ." It would be a delicate, beautiful form of reproach merely to remind the erring son in all gentleness that now the past was over and they must reconstruct their attitudes towards each other, with the faintest hint thrown in of the enduring patience and generosity of a father. Well-founded attributes. Patience. Generosity. Mr. Schenstein had both, and with sane appreciation of his own value, did not hesitate to admit it.

"Yes," Ivan said at last.

"I know you mean well, Ivan," Mr. Schenstein told him. "We're all young once, and I don't want to worry you unduly with my ideas, but so long as we know each other without misunderstandings, I shan't mind so much what you do." He watched him, a little wistfully.

He needed Ivan's sympathy and gratitude and affection so much, and hoped that he would see something of his longing, and say even one word that might give testimony of appreciation. And after all, it was little enough to expect. Ivan might see and acknowledge that indeed he couldn't do without his father.

"You're very good," Ivan said. And Mr. Schenstein lowered his eyes from such surprised acknowledging. He pulled furiously at his cigar. It had been a wonderful moment. Sacramental in its rare truth, but it had passed without effect, and Mr. Schenstein would never be so gentle again. He sat, marveling at the enduring hardness in Ivan.

That his own son could really not care for him was a notion so entirely alien, so impossible to his every principle of relationship, that Mr. Schenstein could not countenance it for a moment. It did not even occur to him as matter for vetoing. Naturally, Ivan cared for him. But this, all this misunderstanding, was her doing. Ivan, through her, was too used to distrusting him, too accustomed to the fostering of a spirit of antagonism to be capable of receiving his appeal for its true worth. No sincerity of his would ever be able thoroughly to convince Ivan. Mr. Schenstein knew it. His son might care for him, but *her* systematic calumny had influenced him too deeply for any trust. But the psychology of time and place was a science Mr. Schenstein forgot to take into consideration. Relying upon Ivan's faculty for sentiment, he imagined that, softened by loss, he must be easily moved. That his son's loss was greater than his own, he overlooked; that sorrow drove all possible sentiment away, he did not consider; and that the

very moment made the appeal repugnant, he did not understand. That Ivan harked back to the dead as a refuge from contact with him, was a matter too involved for his point of view. Ivan should be at least more gracious in a time of trouble.

It all rested upon Mr. Schenstein's conception of Mrs. Schenstein, so different to his son's.

Ivan was thinking, "He'll start bringing in that Sadie business in a minute, on the plea that mother would want me to be obliging and accommodating, and all the rest of it. It's utterly out of place and insincere. He's simply seizing an excellent opportunity." So he sat and stared steadily out of window, and refused to be drawn out. And Mr. Schenstein, a smoke-screened figure of unrequited love, would say no more. So they remained together, silent and morose, as the master and mistress of those after-dinner drawing-rooms had done, till that long day had ended.

At last Ivan rose and stretched.

"Well, I'm going out," he said. "I'll be back in time."

Mr. Schenstein nodded.

"All right. I'll stay here. I want a rest. The train goes at five-five, I believe."

And he remained there, a disappointed old man, at a loss to understand his disappointment.

And he considered, as in his leisure moments he always did consider, his son, and all that he would have him do, and how, without doubt, things would be easier now, much easier, once the first shock had subsided.

CHAPTER XV

NO NEED FOR A WREATH

ONE day Ivan went over to Hampstead. He went, not so much because he was and had been expected to do so ever since his return to London, but rather because in a few weeks, passed with seemingly incredibly little to do, he had arrived at that refined point of loneliness and realism when even Sadie occurred to him more as a simple means of hearing a little sincere reference to Anne, than as an unpleasant reminder of her present significance to him; and even the necessity of receiving Mrs. Weinher's sympathy, bugbear as it might be, was preferable to the silence and coldness of a world suddenly deserted, holding neither his mother nor Anne, a lonely, hopeless world. Besides, his father pressed the subject of his going so much and so often, that it was a relief to consent.

Ivan had found his home quite as intolerable as he had expected. Its whole atmosphere seemed nothing but one vast reminder of emptiness.

Nothing anywhere bore any meaning save the suggestion of that which had been its life and presence being gone. There was not a room in which one could remain at rest, not a chair but stood only as a figure of disuse, not a threshold but missed her shadow, and the servants stared at him who had taken her away and returned without her. Ivan wandered about restless and depressed, fingering the little things she had held, smoothing the cushions stiff without the softening impress of her head, looking miserably at the piano closed and silent, and her harp that would never again be stirred to ecstasy beneath her fingers.

He went out early and remained out late, only to return and stand in the hall thinking with compunction of the many nights he might have remembered that she was waiting for him, and come back to give her pleasure; and to go upstairs and pass her room, wherein she no longer sat always cold and shivering over the fire, kept him sleepless for the rest of the night.

Or he would come in earlier, and looking into the drawing-room be driven hastily away by the sight of his father, sitting morosely silent, staring vaguely at the couch whereon she had lain.

So when one night Mr. Schenstein coming in, stood in the hall over the letters, and told him as he turned them over that he must really go up and see the Weinhers—old Weinher had been asking after him only that morning—he, Mr. Schenstein, had been astounded to hear Ivan still had not been near. Why didn't he go? It was only decent after all. He, Mr. Schenstein, hadn't known what to say in reply. But Ivan would have to go now. Ivan replied laconically, "All right. I will. To-morrow afternoon, if you don't object to my getting off."

"You must know I'm not like that," Mr. Schenstein said. "I wouldn't say anything to your taking an hour or two for a thing like that. But why not go up in the evening? Why not go there to dinner? You don't get a bad meal, considering. It can't hurt you, and it may do you good. And anyway they'd be pleased."

"It would hurt me tremendously," Ivan said with decision. "I can't imagine anything that could possibly hurt me more. But I don't mind going up there for an hour if they're really so keen."

"Well, of course," Mr. Schenstein took up his letters and moved towards the dining-room, "I don't want you to injure yourself so much as all that. If dining with your relatives would be so painful you'd certainly better keep

away. But you must call in and tell them how you are. I expect they're wanting to hear everything from you."

Ivan groaned. "I'm sure they are! Why do people always want to have things recounted?"

"I suppose it's only natural," Mr. Schenstein said with his hand on the door.

"It's horrible."

"You take these things too seriously, my boy."

Ivan looked at him moodily.

"Do I? Oh, well, I'll go."

"I wish I hadn't to ask you." Mr. Schenstein passed into the room with a sarcastic face. "Mind you remember me to them all."

"I'm going out," Ivan called as he turned to the stairs. "I shan't be in till three. Mind the door's left unbolted. Last night that fool, Burns, took it into his head to shut the place for the night before twelve."

"I didn't hear much knocking," Mr. Schenstein answered coldly.

"I did knock, then I thought it would be quicker and easier to smash the area door open; you can have the bill sent to me." He went upstairs whistling. Mr. Schenstein listened, hovering over the whisky and soda, with pursed lips and a furrowed brow.

Thus Ivan went to the Weinhers'.

The maid, opening the door, eyed him with a mixed glance of a sort of fear and a sort of understanding. Ivan had a certain reputation below stairs in all houses where he was known. He inquired.

"She's out, sir, and Miss Sadie, too. But I don't think they're going to be long. If you'll come in and wait . . ."

"Out, are they?" Ivan stared at her. "Well, I'll wait a little while. Did they say they'd be in soon?"

"Yes, sir. The mistress said if any one called . . ." She showed him upstairs, walking up with a self-conscious air and a somewhat heightened color. There was some

curious quality in Ivan that affected all maids in this way. Ivan took a chair and she left a-flutter at his kindly smile.

Mrs. Weinher's room almost exactly resembled herself. Generously-proportioned, well-cushioned, ample, liberally embellished, wherein nothing matched, but everything was splendid, with one of those disconcerting carpets that give in a sickening manner when stepped on, plenty of shining brass, and brocade and gold varnish; a dreadful place, the very epitome of an exaggerated luxury, full of outrageous china ornaments and a very modern gas fire. It was as irritating as a room can be, but to one more charitable and infinitely more tolerant than Ivan, there did exist in its very exaggeration a suggestion of generosity and a certain breadth, as if a good deal might be given along with the fulsome display, and indeed from this room Mrs. Weinher did dispense far more charity than her inherited reputation would have dreamt of crediting her with. Ivan, gazing at a wonderful tiger, a-sprawl with ferociously bared fangs before the grate, compared it all with the kind of thing to which he had been accustomed and in which he had been reared. His mother's rooms, cool and quiet, graceful as she herself, where every detail only existed but to assist in evolving the delicate symphony of the whole, and not one note jarred. Where dark floors had depths of shade and many reflections, and bare oaken tables held shallow bowls of floating petals, where ancient mirrors enchanted glimpses of corners and windows and trees against the sky. Pleasant rooms, gracious and calm, where woodlogs burnt in the open hearths, and sun flecks and shadows crept and slid over bare walls, and the pictures hung alone and at rare intervals. To consider them and to see Mrs. Weinher's lavish display made it easily apparent why the melancholy lover of bare places and untampered spaces, small reflections, and tiny shadows, had never moved at her ease amidst the banners and blazonings of the camp. "I wonder what exactly she thought the first time she was in-

troduced to all this, and realized she would have to call herself its relation?" Ivan reflected. Then he remembered mention in her letter of the "three noisy apartments," and wondered where she had learnt about the untampered spaces, till he decided that it must have been in her, part of her, to enjoy which she had sold her unhappy soul. He got up and crossed the room to where on the great grand-piano, Montague Weinher, the young heir, with his hand on his hip and his jeweled little finger askew, with a cigarette at an angle, and his face transfixed in a long, narrow, confident smile, sat cross-legged with such an air. A birthday present to Mrs. Weinher carefully placed where the light should show it to all advantage. Ivan studied it, and, "Why they didn't drown him quickly at birth, and get it over, I can't think," he remarked to himself. He turned away, and there was Sadie, on a side-table, hands at her breast, in the ecstasy of a pose, massive shoulders in full evidence, rich lips well parted to display those excellent, if slightly prominent teeth. Ivan inspected her with an aloof smile. He shrugged and pronounced: "Dental advertisement. All tulle and teeth." He left it and began on the next. "Absolute groves of them," he reflected. "All Weinhers and Weinher friends. It makes a positive feeling of faces in the air. No wonder the room's so stuffy!" He was there, looking very well in uniform; Mrs. Weinher stood on a revolving book-case, stupendous in evening dress, and a reminiscent picture of the Head of the Firm, taken most unwisely in a silk hat, lent a touch of humor to an otherwise depressing scene. But nowhere, not even tucked away half-concealed behind the annihilation of some member of the family, could he discover a single memory of his mother. "Well, that's exactly it," he thought. "They would scarcely be likely to want her among all this crowd. She'd show them up too much!" He went to the window, and stood behind an aspidistra, looking out. "And why is it," he propounded to himself, "that a certain quite

common type of human being must inevitably surround itself with constant reminders of its relations? Is it some instinctive need for the reassurance of numbers? Is it done on some strange principle of comparisons, is it snobbery, since the relatives so displayed are almost invariably only the more creditable ones, or is it the civilized spirit of the family gathered in its members, the clan-spirit, or can it possibly be due to some false and grotesque idea of beauty?" He was still wondering when the door opened and Mrs. Weinher and Sadie entered.

"Well now, my dear boy, after all this time." Mrs. Weinher assailed Ivan affectionately.

Ivan explained, accounting for the length of the time with the ingenuity of polite self-confidence.

"I would have loved to come before," he finished, "but you know how things have been."

"Well now, sit down, do." Mrs. Weinher settled herself on a small chair and eyed him amiably. The chair looked so exceptionally tiny with her upon it that Ivan, almost embarrassed, suggested the lounge.

"No, thank you. I don't get up so easily once I'm down, when I take the sofa," Mrs. Weinher explained smilingly. "But you have it—and Sadie, you go and sit by Ivan. You're not shy because you haven't seen him for so long, I suppose?"

"Of course not." Sadie came over with flustered emphasis and took as much of the corner as she could. Mrs. Weinher laughed. "That's it." There was a short silence. Plainly anticipatory on the part of Mrs. Weinher. Ivan waited.

"We did nearly call to-day—(That's right, do smoke)," Mrs. Weinher said. "We weren't far, but then I thought—(No, thank you, not for me now)—it wasn't very likely we'd find any one in, so it would only be wasting time. But I've been wanting to see you, Ivan." She paused, then continued: "It was all so dreadfully sudden

and sad." Another pause and then, "I know how you must feel her loss. It must have been a dreadful blow. And coming so suddenly too! I don't know what to say!"

"There isn't anything to be said," Ivan answered.

"She never was strong," Mrs. Weinher sighed. "I remember years ago, I'd come over from Streatham—we were living at Streatham then—and find her laid up on a sofa looking anything but well. I always felt anything might happen in those days. But it is terribly sad."

"Yes," said Ivan.

Mrs. Weinher had had it all on her mind for sufficient time to have forgotten everything save that she badly wanted to know more than she did. And she was rather tactless by nature.

"And you had to leave her over there right away in . . . where was it you went to?"

"St. Hilaire."

"St. Hilaire, yes, well, it does seem shocking!"

Ivan was silent, staring gravely over the floor.

"I don't know I'm sure what your poor father must feel like," continued Mrs. Weinher. "All alone now, for, of course, a son must naturally be different to a wife—and so suddenly left. He must be quite dazed, I should say. But I know him," she nodded a little reassuringly. "He'll bear up."

Ivan glanced up and at her suddenly.

"Oh, yes," he said, with a quick note vibrating in his voice. "Of course, I don't suppose he's ever felt anything quite so deeply as this, but he'll manage to survive, by sheer force of will. He won't let it master him."

"No," Mrs. Weinher nodded seriously. "That's right."

Ivan turned to Sadie.

"And how's life with you? Bad as ever?"

Sadie turned as if she had been prodded. Ivan's voice in its amused tolerance somehow always took her unawares. She laughed.

"I'm sure I don't know why you should say so," she said. "Of course I'm feeling dreadfully upset about poor Cousin Evelyn. I think it's terrible. I couldn't believe it when I heard. Somehow I never thought she'd really die. When we got the news I was in quite a state. It upset me awfully." She stopped, looked at him, then, for some reason, a trifle confused, added, "I *was* upset!"

"Yes," chimed in Mrs. Weinher. "We were all at breakfast in the morning. And Monty sorted out the post. He gave father his, and when I saw the envelope lying there down by father's plate I said to myself, 'There's something wrong.' Something seemed to come to me and tell me so. And there it was! We were all so surprised! Monty had to see the letter himself before he'd believe it. We couldn't say a word. I don't know when I've eaten less for my breakfast. And then afterwards I was going straight out to order a nice wreath, when I remembered it wouldn't be needed really right out there, and then when I thought I went right off upstairs and had a good cry. I couldn't help it. It did seem so sad!" She stopped and her voice changed. "Ivan, if there should be anything I could do in any way, be sure and let me know at once. I'd be only too pleased. I should feel I was taking her place and doing it for her in my small way."

Ivan began to wish he had thought better of coming. He had not imagined quite this, though he thought he might have known. With an effort he brought his eyes to Mrs. Weinher's kindly, waiting face.

"Thanks very much," he said slowly, "I will, if there is anything. But we're just going on as usual, you know. Father doesn't seem to be thinking of any change. I shall most probably be going away . . ."

"Will you?" Mrs. Weinher took him up.

"Going away," went on Ivan, "and coming back again, and perhaps going away again, you know. But nothing's changed, and yet it's all changed, you understand."

Mrs. Weinher nodded sympathetically.

"I know," she said.

There was another long silence. Ivan stared into his cigarette smoke. Mrs. Weinher stared deeply at a hassock. Sadie played with her dangling pendant, and stared harder than any one at nothing whatever. Then, at last, Mrs. Weinher, as if stirred by some passing reflection, clicked her tongue once or twice and gently shook her head. . . .

"Dreadful," she said. "Doesn't bear thinking of."

It seemed to Ivan that he had never been so near to tears. The horror and hopelessness was enough to drive him to hysteria. But he only stared harder than ever, and said nothing.

Another lengthy silence, then Mrs. Weinher moved.

"Well, all I can say is, I had the shock of my life. It wasn't so much that I was really surprised. I knew she hadn't been well for a long time past, but I must say it never occurred to me that she'd go away like that and never come back. I never thought of such a thing."

Ivan fixed his gaze on the fireplace.

"To think that was the last time we were to go and see her, well . . ." Mrs. Weinher shook her head once more, unable to do justice to the drama of the situation.

Ivan broke the oppression of a further long quiet.

"I hope you're very well," he said.

Mrs. Weinher was all smiles.

"Oh, yes. I can't say I've got much to grumble about," she said. "I keep very well, remarkably well, considering."

"Touch wood," said Sadie uncontrollably.

Mrs. Weinher smiled again.

"Yes, touch wood," she agreed.

She looked at Ivan and got up.

"Well, I'm not going to say, 'You're staying to dinner,' Ivan," she said. "I'm going to take it for granted."

Ivan started. "No, really," he began. "I'm afraid I can't."

"Of course," Mrs. Weinher said, "you must. . . ."

"Thanks very much. It's awfully good of you, but I simply can't."

"Oh, but you've got to," Mrs. Weinher insisted. "After all this long time, and you can't give us an evening!"

"I would, really, only . . ."

"No." Mrs. Weinher was decided. "I simply won't take no for an answer. You've got to stop. We've been looking forward to it."

Ivan thought how awful it would be, and rapidly reviewed ways of escape. "Why did I come!" he cried within himself.

"That's right. Why, I never heard of such a thing." Mrs. Weinher got quite excited. "You can't come and run away like that! I should never forgive myself for letting you."

Ivan still hesitated.

"It isn't that I don't want to, of course," he began, "but . . ."

"No, but nothing." Mrs. Weinher was playful, but firm. "It's settled."

Ivan, as big a liar on a point of courtesy as any one, capitulated in despair.

"Well, thanks awfully then, I'd love to; it was only that I was going somewhere, but . . ."

"You can phone downstairs," Mrs. Weinher told him. "That'll be all right." She got up and moved towards the door. "It will be very nice. I believe father said he'd be home early, didn't he, Sadie? Well, that's all right then. And Monty, I hope he comes home in time to see you. I never know with Monty. Sometimes he's back early, sometimes he doesn't get in till very late, or sometimes I get a message over the phone to say he's not coming home at all. He's uncertain. But I know he'll be sorry if he misses you. Of course"—Mrs. Weinher had reached the door by now; Ivan and Sadie both staring after her in a sort of

apathetic entreaty—"of course I know you see a good deal of each other in business during the day, but naturally meeting in business isn't really like meeting at all. I always think so at any rate. I mean, so impersonal and all that. I've known your Uncle Julius meet some one at the office whom he wouldn't have spoken to during office hours, and he's met him elsewhere in the evening and they've been the best of friends!" She smiled a benevolent smile of satisfaction. "Though of course, I know that's not always the case. But what I mean is you can't call meeting in business really knowing each other in a nice friendly way, can you?"

"No, I know what you mean," Ivan agreed.

Mrs. Weinher smiled at them both.

"Well, I just want to pop downstairs for a minute. I won't be long. Just to see everything's being hurried up. Maids do want so much looking after these days. Sadie, you talk to Ivan now."

Nodding, smiling, Mrs. Weinher went out in a whirl of geniality.

Left together, Sadie and Ivan sat side by side in silence.

Ivan still supported his chin on his stick and stared heavily at the carpet. Sadie, who as usual was feeling more, far more than she could possibly put into words, stared also. She was so terribly conscious that this fussy hospitality and general flurry of pleased cordiality were so exactly what made Ivan even less interested in the object of it all than he would in any case have been. This strangely simple show of genuine pleasure on the part of her mother, inevitably had its own effect. It seemed scarcely to be wondered at that Ivan was contemptuous, thought them all dull and uninteresting, and really had been longing to get out of accepting her mother's quite unnecessarily pressing invitation to stay and dine. With eyes glassy, and mouth dropping in preoccupation, Sadie brooded upon the comparisons so plain to herself, and yet which

her mother and the others seemed so curiously incapable of perceiving. Did they imagine that Ivan, having met and known any other girl, having known, particularly, Anne Hurst, would ever countenance the notion of marrying her? Her, Sadie Weinher! Just one of his boring relations, some one whom he knew and thought of by mere force of habit more than anything else, whom he delighted to tease and worry; the "funny" girl, whom she knew—ah, Sadie knew well, with dreary understanding—he laughed at often, and thought a good joke. Did they really think that he had eyes for her, just one among the many upon whom his eyes must rest? Was it possible that her mother, filled with anxiety to obtain for her daughter what she called "a good match," believed that all this pleasant welcoming was any lure, any additional attraction? That if they made the young heir sufficiently at home, gave him a good meal and said, "Come again soon," he would think her any the more worth having? Did they? Sadie wondered vaguely, uneasily aware of the fallacy of it all. And yet, with quite exceptional balance of mind, she did not, thinking thus, cry, as she might very easily have done, fiercely in her heart, "I don't want him. I wouldn't have him at any price." Instead she regarded him for a little out of the corner of one eye, marked the finely modeled lines of his profile, the curving, subtly attractive lips, and the eyes downcast, large and long-lashed; she looked at the thick backward sweep of his dark hair, and thought, "It's not that I would refuse him if he wanted me, because it would be so much, much easier than going to all the trouble of refusing and explaining and making father and mother so terribly angry, and besides he's not at all bad-looking. I could put up with him quite well. But he'll never want me, of course. For one thing he's in love with Anne. I suppose it's a good thing." She was eyeing him again, when she felt suddenly almost sick with the painful shock of a self-conscious person unprepared for a glance.

Ivan's dusky eyes glowed as they turned sideways under his lowered lids and fixed on her. She smiled at him.

"Well, you needn't stare like that! You gave me quite a turn!"

"Did I really? I am sorry." He paused a moment, then said suddenly: "Look here, I want Anne's address."

Sadie regarded him as if she could not understand.

"Anne? Anne Hurst? Do you want her address?"

"Please."

"Haven't you got it?" she asked.

"No." Ivan shook his head. "I did have it, but I'm afraid I must have lost it somehow. Anyway, I want it now."

Sadie was silent. Then she said, eyeing him with a sort of arched understanding:

"Well, you know, perhaps she'd rather I didn't, you know!"

It was not that for one moment Sadie thought this at all likely to be the case, or because she wanted to be specially tactless, but simply, she followed an impulse, common with her, a clumsy intention to try and be tantalizing and rather more clever than usual.

Ivan replied instantly:

"Oh, of course, that's as you like. But I don't think you need worry. You see she did give it to me, only I suppose while I was away I lost it. But still . . ."

"It's down in Worcestershire," Sadie said. "Don't be so mad, Ivan. Of course I only said that for fun. Did she give it to you then?" She stopped abruptly, as if struck by some brilliant idea, a smile began to hover round her mouth, she looked at Ivan with heavy mischief, and the smile faded as she met his sternly disapproving glance. "I mean—" she stopped again, dreadfully confused, "I mean —well, you know it seems—well, I mean it was—you know . . ." She broke off, completely incoherent, overcome by the embarrassment which seemed to have centered

in a feeling of fearful warmth just over her mouth and under her nose. "It's down in Worcestershire."

"I knew that." Ivan waited.

"Worcestershire," said Sadie. "Let me see now, where was it? I never can remember names of places. Oh! whatever was it? Fancy, and I've written to her, and yet I can't think! I don't know. I'll have to look it out and let you have it some time. You're in no hurry? Wait. I had it then. Burn . . . Burn something. That's the name of the house. Burn . . . Burn Deans. That's it. I remember now, because for some reason I always think of a Dean, you know, and his funny gaiters, and then I—I think of burn, you know and—and get it." She stopped, wishing Ivan would not persist in staring at her. It was so confusing.

"I see." Ivan smiled at her kindly. "That's how you get it, is it? Well, now, isn't there some other train of associations that might possibly lead you to remember the place it is situated in? Think hard."

"Haverford near Henton," Sadie said all at once in one breath.

"What? Say it again."

Sadie complied. "It just came to me," she cried with glee. "That's how things always come to me. Suddenly, like that."

Calmly, with great precision, Ivan extracted a notebook from a pocket and wrote down the address. "Thanks awfully," he said, and replaced the book and pencil. Then he returned to eyeing Sadie again.

Sadie, who had regarded the whole process of annotation with extreme seriousness, said nothing. She was feeling like an exhibit under glass. Then he smiled.

"Sadie, you needn't mention this to the whole world, you understand, but the fact is—Anne's going to marry me."

Sadie stared very hard indeed.

"Oh!!" she got out at last. "Is she?"

Ivan nodded. He was more than a little surprised himself, and wondered what idea had prompted such a wild statement, but he felt at once that it could not do much harm, even supposing—which some instinct told him was unlikely—Sadie were to communicate the astonishing piece of news to her parents, for something definite of some nature or other would certainly have to happen soon, and it might conceivably do some good. If only Sadie herself could convince her relations that her marriage with him, even considered as a mere proposition, was utterly out of the question, nothing would be more effective. If she just quietly made the whole scheme an impossibility by steadfastly refusing to consider it, all other things might be arranged with comparative ease. And then, too, it happened that Ivan for some reason felt he would quite like her to know. Not that she might be hurt or piqued or tormented, but because she knew Anne and loved her, and had never done any one any harm, and it didn't much matter, as it was Sadie, that it wasn't true.

"Yes," he said. "Mind, it's quite a secret, needless to say. Anne doesn't want any one to know. Absolutely no one, so don't for goodness' sake go writing a congratulatory letter or anything, on the spur of the moment."

Sadie had her answer for once.

"Indeed I shan't," she said quickly.

Ivan laughed.

"That's one for me! Well, I daresay you're perfectly right. I'm sure you're right," he added generously. "Not much ground for congratulation, what? Good for you, Sadie. But anyway, you see it's got to be kept very dark at present because—" he paused and looked at her gravely. "Well, because, as things are, it simply can't come out."

"Me," suggested Sadie.

"Yes. That's it. You know, I imagine, as well as I do that our respected relatives have got hold of some wild

idea about my marrying you. Well, you must see at once how impossible that is."

"Yes," Sadie agreed, as ingenuous as Ivan.

"Well," continued Ivan, "I don't know why I'm talking to you like this. I mean, since it's all a secret, there isn't much object perhaps. Except that I wish you'd get hold of the idea properly, don't you know, and do what you can to make them all see the utter futility of their schemes. Try and let it sink into them that under no circumstances are we at all likely to be married. I wish you would," he said as she looked at him. "You see, if I said anything definite now it's come to that point when there'd be a smash-up. My father—you know what he's like, and he seems to be perfectly mad on you, yes, really, you know what I mean—keeps harping on your charms and good sense and general assets; well, it's no use my saying, 'Yes, quite, only not for me,' sort of thing, because he'd only say, 'Very well, my boy, perhaps you'd like to make yourself responsible for your own future, entirely,' or words to that effect. Now you see what I'm driving at, don't you? You start from now onward sort of dropping hints, sowing the seed, and all that. When next your mother says how nice I am, and what a good husband or something, you h'm and say something in a way to the reverse. If they get as far as asking you, 'Would you care to marry Ivan Schenstein?' say outright, you'd simply hate anything of the sort. But try and let them see how things are. Only don't"—Ivan made the point with great emphasis—"for God's sake, start hinting that I'm engaged already or anything like that, of course. That would just about finish everything. But do your best. Do you understand?"

Sadie was quiet for a time. One of her indefinite sensations of comprehension came to her, and she reflected how completely did Ivan think nothing of her, since he could thus speak, confide in her, appeal to her for help upon such a matter. And, she thought, to all intents and pur-

poses, in the view of those interested, they were practically affianced! She saw that they, he and she, could never attain any more perfect relationship than this impersonal, disinterested sort of partnership. He simply did not care, but he trusted her after a fashion, and thought she might be useful. That was all.

"Yes, I see," she said.

And Ivan was thinking that, always provided he had not to marry Sadie, he might possibly like her well enough. Once the significance placed on her by her friends had been for ever removed, she would be relegated to a position so absolutely unimportant, that she might be quite nice in the background. She was perhaps, after all, not a bad sort. She knew Anne. He felt pleased with her. Sadie did not guess that.

"You do?" he said. "That's good."

"I'll do what I can," she told him. "What you want is for me to pave the way for you to get Anne? For you to marry her and not get cut off with a shilling?"

"That's it. If you will. It will be a charity." Ivan leant back, with a peaceful expression. There was silence. Then Sadie, feeling naturally a little less handicapped than usual, spoke with a note of eloquence in her voice.

"I'm sure I don't know how the idea ever came up. I never gave any one the least cause to think I—I wanted to marry you."

"I'm sure you didn't," said Ivan. "And neither, I can assure you, did I. But they must have brought up the idea while I was in France. When I came home expecting a little peace and quietness, I was faced almost at once with this. I—well, you know, it's not too much to say I thought they'd all gone mad. I mean, I never dreamt of such a thing. Of course not! I didn't take it seriously for a long time. Mother did though! She knew they meant it. She was dead against it from the first. She always saw my side, but father—my dear girl, you can't imagine what he's

been like! It's got now that I daren't open a single topic of conversation for fear in some way it'll veer round into two or three hints about you! It's awful!"

Sadie laughed. "It must be."

Ivan was very absorbed.

"Yes, really! He's as obstinate as three mules, and as I say, he thinks you're perfectly sweet! Well, of course," Ivan perceived that the conversation was rather ludicrous, and became more rational. "That goes without saying."

Sadie laughed.

"No, don't laugh, I mean it."

"Ivan! You liar!"

"No, what I mean is this. Your being so nice and charming and so on, while it may be an undoubted fact, doesn't count with me one way or the other, because you see . . ."

"You love Anne."

"That's it. Now you've got the whole thing. And you do see, don't you now, exactly how things are, and why I want you to give me a hand in convincing this amazing family of ours that we're not made for each other?"

Sadie, still faintly smiling, sat thinking. She was trying to remember the impression Anne had made on her during those last two days before she left them. The change, whatever it was, had been too slight to be noticeable, unless one were looking out for it, and she had not been. Yet, had that smallest suggestion of a deeper quiet, that shade of melancholy in her eyes, been caused by the secret she bore, that she was engaged to Ivan, or had it been due to some sadness? She had thought little of it at the time; it rarely occurred to Sadie to jump to conclusions, but hearing all this now, she wondered . . . Anne would never say a word . . . but why should Ivan make it up?

"It's an awful pity it has to be like this," Ivan remarked after a time.

Sadie nodded. "Yes," she said.

"But I know you can be a great help if you will."

Sadie turned slightly, drawn out by the warmth and friendliness in Ivan's voice. "I don't really care about getting married at all just yet," she said. "I'm very happy as I am, you know, and mother wants me at home. It's only father and Monty really, who are so keen. Father wants to see me settled, and the family joined up, and then he wants to please Uncle Solomon."

"That terrible union of the family," murmured Ivan, "I know."

"Yes. And Monty. Well, Monty, you know what he is. He doesn't care a damn either way, whether I get married or die an old maid, but he thinks it wouldn't be a bad idea, and he hates me to be at home, of course, so he thinks it would be a good way to get rid of me for good; that's all with him, except . . ." She came to a dead stop, and twisted her pendant.

Ivan looked up. "What?" he said.

Sadie bent her head.

"What?" repeated Ivan.

Sadie looked up.

"Oh, except he doesn't like you," she answered.

"Of course. But that's not what you were going to say." Ivan directed an immovable gaze on the heavy curves of Sadie's chin as she looked at her lap.

"Look here, you've got to tell me. You shouldn't have started. I mean to hear it all now."

"Oh, what do you think, Ivan! You know he doesn't like you!"

"Yes. But that's not this reason. There was something else you were going to say."

Ivan suspected nothing in particular, but he was far too deeply suspicious by nature to let some quality of significance, noticeable in Sadie's usually rather meaningless voice, pass.

Sadie emitted the little indeterminate giggle, her usual refuge from any awkward moment.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you won't like it. But you did ask, so I can't help it. Well, except, I was going to say, Monty used to rather fancy Anne, in a silly sort of way of course, and she wouldn't have anything to do with him. And now he knows that you and she are rather keen, he'd be awfully glad if you couldn't have her." There was silence, the while Ivan stared; Sadie laughed, watching him. "I knew you'd be cross," she said. "I'm always letting the cat out of the bag. It's a pity I started. I don't mean he was serious, not Monty! And I think he's forgotten her now in any case, only he hasn't forgotten that she didn't take any notice of his silly goings-on, and that she did seem to like you all right, and he'd simply love you to marry me; he'd do anything to work it, just to spite you, you know." Sadie laughed again. "He knows how you'd hate it." She stopped, smiling.

Ivan, who had been listening most intently, drew a long breath. "I always said," he observed, "that Monty was the last fantastic exaggeration of a blighted cad. Now I know I was right. To think of that—that creature daring to cast his swivel-eye on Anne! My God! He fancies himself! It would be a bit more decent if he had been sincere—no, not decent—any amorous advances on the part of Monty, however well-meant, could never be anything but indecent, but at least . . . so that's the idea, is it? That offensive growth! But I don't know why I didn't guess. I might have known." Ivan's tones subsided a little. "Poor Anne. I suppose all your choice specimens were the same. Anne must have had a time!" Sadie looked very good-humored.

"Well, I daresay you're annoyed now, as you say you're engaged, but you weren't always engaged, you know. You can't grumble just because any one else thought the same as you did when Anne was stopping here. Why shouldn't

they? Besides, Anne didn't mind. We used to have a lot of fun, of course, but she could take care of herself, with Monty. They used to—well, you know, we had some dances, and people used to be here in the evenings; well, you were yourself, so I needn't tell you. One or two did get rather gone on her, but she didn't mind. She thought it rather nice of them, I'm sure."

"I wonder her head wasn't turned," said Ivan scathingly.

"You're only jealous!" Sadie accused him, smiling. "And I'm sure I don't know what about, for however keen Monty was, that's all over now. He doesn't mope over lost loves, don't you worry! Not Monty! There's nothing to be jealous about."

"I jealous!" Ivan cried. "Jealous! What of? Of Monty! And Alphonse Bernheimer, and Maurice Herga, and that quaint little caricature, Joseph—whatever his name is! All that crowd! Jealous of them! No, no, Sadie, don't misjudge me, I beg. I was only marveling at the presumption of a certain type of human being. It's more amusing than anything else. Only Monty is a bit awful to think of; the rest don't count. But Monty! It's so repulsive! To think of Anne being forced out of politeness to receive the gracious confidence of Monty's smile, or the beastly personalities of his fishy eye!" He stopped, eyeing her with wild gloom.

Sadie laughed comfortably.

"Go on. I don't know when I've heard him so well described! Though I must say, Ivan, you don't spare him. After all, he can't help his eye, or his smile, either, really. And you are jolly hard on my friends. They're all very nice. Alphonse and Maurice are ever so nice. Alphonse happens to be engaged to a friend of mine. He wouldn't have dreamt of such a thing."

"Such a thing!" Ivan snorted. "What an ambiguity! And besides, as if that would make any difference!"

"Well, it would anyway," and Sadie sat very erect, and

gazed stiffly at the carpet. For some time neither spoke, then Ivan, paring his finger-nails in deep thought, said suddenly:

"Of course I could guess quite easily. About the other, I mean. Monty's always full of intentions concerning other people. I'm sure to be in his schemes . . ." he laughed. "I wonder how he'll work the thing; he'll have to use his wits to get me married off! It adds zest to the contest, being up against that ingenious brain. Poor old Monty! His life must be full of cares. He takes other people too seriously."

"He'd be pleased to hear you and Anne were engaged!" Sadie remarked.

Ivan started slightly. Of course he must remember the engagement.

"Don't tell him," he said.

There was silence. Sadie leant against her corner rather tired. It was impossible to avoid feeling just a little depressed by all this intensity concerning some one else. She resented nothing. But the whole thing seemed awkward and futile and somewhat uninteresting. She longed for her mother to come back, but knew well that the estimable Mrs. Weinher, having got out of the room, leaving so successfully her daughter and nephew together, would have no intention of returning until the very last possible moment.

A pop downstairs can be extended to practically any length of time, if necessary. Sadie reflected affectionately that now, without doubt, her mother was busy thinking that once Ivan were left alone with her he simply would not be able to resist her charms. "She probably thinks we must have nearly settled everything by now." Ivan was lying back, his face raised to the smoke of his cigarette. With a tiny thrill, Sadie, in a covert glance, noted the civilized enhancement of a watch on that firm, graceful wrist, and fell to considering all he had told her, and Anne . . .

A sigh quickened and was born suddenly in her heart. It took her unawares, but with great presence of mind she overlaid it. So they were engaged! When would Anne write and tell her?

At last Ivan spoke.

"Well," he said, "it's all very ghastly. But still it doesn't much matter. Anne's out of Monty's way, and as for the other thing—well, he can't blackmail me into marrying you exactly. I don't think I shall find his intentions a fearful encumbrance."

Sadie laughed.

"He might," she said, "blackmail you."

Ivan nodded. He got up and walked over to the fireplace. He stood there, eyeing himself over one shoulder, in the huge gilt mirror, with half-conscious satisfaction.

"What a curse one's people are," he said. "I can't explain how it is, but I seem to be absolutely hemmed in by a maze of the most weird restrictions and barriers. And yet when I try to lay a finger on one definitely, I can't say where it is. There's father, full of ideas about everything, but it seems now as if he oughtn't to be such an insurmountable difficulty to my doing what I want in life. And yet when I see him, and hear him: 'You've got a responsible future, my boy, don't forget that. You must consider it carefully,' or else something too obvious to be overlooked about you, honestly, I feel as if I were about five. Not that I'm afraid, you know, but simply that I shan't be *able* to do as I like. And yet all the time I know I *can*. It's oppressive."

Sadie looked at him uncertainly.

"Mother's been kept," she said, for want of a better remark.

Ivan nodded.

"Exactly! Of course she has! And there's the whole thing in a nutshell. Why *should* they all think they can have a hand in my existence like this? Why can't I do

what I like? Why is an ordinary visit to you, for instance, fraught with such fearful possibilities?"

Sadie laughed.

"I don't know," she said.

"You don't." Ivan looked down at her. "No, neither do I! Of course he's against my marrying a Christian. But he did so himself, and just because, from his point of view, marrying a Christian didn't happen to turn out as he expected, is that a reason why I shouldn't be allowed to make the same experiment? And then he wants me to marry some one with money. But what if I don't happen to love any one with money? That doesn't seem to matter. And then, because he's got the family habit absolutely on the brain, he wants me to marry into the family. My God!" Ivan ground out his cigarette, intensely serious. "I haven't got that family feeling. And I don't know anything that could make me less keen on marrying into mine than the suffocating matter-of-course way in which I'm fully expected to. And yet, as if I hadn't got a soul to call my own, it doesn't count whether I want to marry or not the woman he's chosen for me, I've simply got to. And I won't! I will *not!*" Ivan laid stress over stress on the words: "I simply will not be forced into any single thing. It's the most immoral outrage I've ever come across. My father and your father are both perfectly mad. Something will have to be done about it."

"Why don't you tell him outright?" suggested Sadie.

"What?"

Sadie laughed a little.

"What you've just been saying. Say you're going to have Anne. He can't eat you."

Ivan gazed darkly at the rug.

"Perhaps not, but he can and would make things extraordinarily unpleasant."

There was silence. Then Ivan went on:

"You see, the fact is I'm in a frightful position.

There's no doubt about that. It's his own fault, it's precisely the position he wanted me to be in, and—well, I'm in it. Do you know, at the present moment, I'm absolutely and completely dependent upon father for everything."

"No more than Monty is," interrupted Sadie sturdily. "Or all the men we know. All the men who come here are in their fathers' businesses. But they earn what they get."

"Well, you see, that's just where I'm so different. I don't earn what I get, not by any means. In fact if I had to earn what I get, I should be pretty badly off. I'm not quite such a fool as to imagine I'm even remotely worth all I get out of him. But I do get a lot, and in return, I'm expected to do, roughly speaking, what he says. And not—or, most decidedly not—start getting ideas above myself about marrying!

"You see," Ivan faced Sadie, without a trace of embarrassment, "it's like this. Father says: 'You're my son, and I haven't brought you up to take care of yourself. I purposely saw that you never learnt anything you could turn to much account. I wanted you to be dependent. Sons who can take care of themselves are apt to get inconveniently independent sometimes. Very well then, that being so, you have to come to me to be able to live in the style which appeals to you. I'm fairly willing to supply you with everything necessary, *but* (and this is where it all comes in) you've got to live as I want you to. There must be no getting married without my approval, no getting into affairs which might in any way injure mine and the family pride. . . . That's clear.' Well," said Ivan, carefully poking the tiger's head with his stick, in the preoccupation of his subject, "if I go to him and say that if he thinks I'm going to do the very thing he wants me to do above everything, he's sadly mistaken; that instead, I'm going to do the very thing I believe he'd hate above everything else on earth, and marry Anne, a Christian, you

know, and all the rest of it, he'll say, after a lot of fuss and trouble, 'Oh, very well, I can't stop you hanging yourself, if you want to spoil your life, but if you can't see your way clear to considering me, I don't see why I should see my way clear to considering you.' And that will be that." Ivan paused and studied the tiger's head introspectively.

Sadie, all attention, kept her eyes upon him, waiting.

"Now, you see," continued Ivan, "how on earth can I do all that? Marry poor Anne, and expect her to live on about threepence a week, when perhaps in time something better may be arranged. It's not possible. No, what I'm hoping for is for something, as I say, to happen." Ivan paused, caught up with the breadth of this statement. "Something to happen. That's the only thing. Something will have to happen soon. Things can't go on as they are at present much longer. But I think that if you can manage to straighten things out by backing out of it all yourself, as kindly and tactfully as possible, but at the same time, firmly, you know, it may all die a natural death. . . . It will take time, of course, and that's a fearful nuisance, but it seems to me better in the long run than doing the fine, heroic thing, and taking the bull by the horns. Anne doesn't want to live on nothing, and I'm sure I don't, so that's the end of it. But that, as I look at it, is why I can't tell him outright."

He stopped and Sadie nodded. She could see it all so well.

"And you've got it all settled with Anne that she doesn't mind waiting?" she inquired.

Ivan lit another cigarette.

"Oh, yes," he replied, a trifle off-hand, "she sees it as I do. She quite understands my position. She knows it can't be helped."

Once more Sadie cast her mind back to the morning of Anne's departure. Then no doubt that hint of sadness had

been caused by the knowledge that she might have to wait a very long time indeed for Ivan. If she were very much in love, no wonder she had looked a little downcast.

"I see," she said, "you're very unfortunate."

"I know I am."

Sadie looked up at him, and she said, with a half-diffident smile, and faint apologies in her tones:

"You're sure there's nothing you can do, I suppose? There must be something."

"Oh, there are plenty of things. I could start at once—at least I could, unless father, not trusting my sudden spirit of independence, put a stop to it by refusing to supply me with the essential wherewithal—but I could start something that would be fearfully remunerative in about ten years' time! But the waiting would be as long or longer than it is now, and even more unpleasant.

"Here I've got a job, a good one too, and I know enough to be able to run it well enough, when it's my own; sooner or later, I suppose I'm pretty well bound to come into an excellent position, one that would obviate the necessity for ever doing anything else. What's the good of trying to be a doctor, or a solicitor, or a journalist or anything else, when really I'm fixed with my career? As soon as I were qualified, father would die or get softened or something, and then all the work and money would be for nothing." He paused and stared for a moment. "Except, of course, that I should be independent," he added. "But then I feel certain so many objections and annoyances would be placed as if by magic in my way, once I started trying to become anything for the future, that I simply shouldn't be able to carry it out. No, it's not feasible. I'm fixed and I can only wait."

"It seems funny there isn't anything you could do, though"—Sadie still clung to Ivan's capabilities—"to make enough."

"Enough! But, my dear girl, what do you call enough?"

Ivan's whole voice betrayed that peculiar spirit of outraged conviction so common in those who are certain of their disabilities. "What would you have me do? Start a rival company? Be a policeman or a chauffeur? You don't know anything about money. I daresay I could get a clerk's wage. But that's not enough. Not for Anne."

"I don't believe she's so hard to please," Sadie observed. "I believe it's you who are hard to please, Ivan. It's you who are afraid of not having enough." Sadie possessed, of course, the simple wisdom of a simple person accustomed to see what comes directly beneath her gaze, and remark upon it. Ivan looked at her, aghast at the plain truth of the statement.

"I don't know why you should say that," he said at last.

Sadie, highly pleased with herself, laughed.

"Well, isn't it true? You are a bit nervous of having to do without things you like. I don't wonder," she added with feeling, "I can't imagine myself anything more awful than not to have enough money, but . . ." she paused.

"But what?" Ivan looked at her interestedly.

"I was only going to say"—sudden confidence in herself had given Sadie unusual fluency; she felt she was understanding and talking to Ivan as she was never likely to be able to again; there was no possible ceremony between them, therefore it was impossible to feel really nervous; and besides, was she not as good as he?—"that though I should simply hate to have to go without anything myself, I should . . . well, I mean, aren't you going without anything now? I mean"—a half-smile moved her lips as she returned Ivan's gaze—"if you love her?"

There was silence, then Ivan moved suddenly, and sat down to consider this. Sadie, her hands clasped about her knees, waited. . . . And in her heart was pain, for it seemed to her that "though of course to go without" was a terrible deprivation, she herself could have made such a sacrifice, and endured the suffering only to her own satis-

faction. Simply the lack of opportunity made the longing within her.

To have the chance, Sadie in her simplicity could have given up so well and quietly, without knowledge or thought of the nobility of self-sacrifice. If only she could have had the chance! Deep within her was a detachment akin to her curiously lonely life. No one could help her, no one thought to do so, or indeed ever dreamt that she might be in need. She had everything, as a few unfortunates, denied the adventure of poverty, the thrill of the unexpected, do, and behold! in the midst of her matter-of-fact acceptance of her possessions, the dormant, unsuspected ache would rouse and stir, and Sadie, poor innocent, would try, frightened, to lull it, and never succeed. Yet she held in her mazed, uncertain state, an independence greater than the high-handed arrogance of Ivan, a freedom fuller than his protested powers; no circumstance tied her inmost yearnings, no fear would have held her if only opportunity would but entice her on.

Incoherent in her perpetual confusion, convulsed by her undefinable embarrassment, she still could stare at Ivan, feeling, all too surely, what she in his place would have done.

Suddenly Ivan emerged from his thoughts, and said:

"Then you don't think I ought to stick out and try to work the thing round in my own way?"

It was the first time, in her remembrance, that he had ever asked her for an opinion, seriously, and Sadie met the inquiry with the dignity suitable to such an august occasion.

"Well," she replied, "I think you should decide what it is that you can't do without, and whichever it is, go for it. I don't see how you can want one thing and have another, properly, not unless you make up your mind to go without the thing you want. It's no good beating about the bush."

"Really, then, you think I'm a coward or a fool, or both?" pressed Ivan.

Sadie said nothing, assimilating such an intriguing idea. She became a little restless, and began to shift about.

"Oh, well, no! I'm sure I don't think anything quite so bad as that. I mean . . . Oh, no! All—all I meant was that—well, you simply must do something. You can't say 'I want Anne, and yet I don't want her this way, and yet I do want her, and I can't have her that way.' It's so silly."

"Yes, isn't it?" Ivan laughed. "You're perfectly right. And you think it would be a good thing to ask Anne if she won't mind being quite poor if she'll marry me as I am?"

"She's accepted you," pondered Sadie, half to herself.

"Yes, of course," Ivan remembered. "Yes, but I mean, do you think she would mind being poor with me? So far, she hopes, as I do, that something better would be arranged."

"I bet she doesn't," exclaimed Sadie, on a flash of real insight.

"Doesn't?" Ivan was interested. "Oh, that's funny. You think she would rather anything than living with"—he looked round—"all this?"

"I feel sure she would much rather," pronounced Sadie with conviction and pride. . . .

Ivan stared at her, absorbed in his reflections. For a long time they neither of them spoke, then he said:

"Well, we must see what can be done. Anne hangs out on a lot, you know. Her objections are rather peculiar. And they seem to have got hold of her pretty strongly. For one thing, she absolutely refuses to give in an inch to father upon any single smallest point about religion of all things in the world. In fact that seems to be the great difficulty—Religion. She's afraid he might make trouble about her keeping up her beliefs, you know."

Sadie nodded.

"She's a Christian, of course. Your father wouldn't like that."

"Well, personally, I can't make out what all the trouble is about. Religion never makes the least difference to me. I had that out with him years ago."

Sadie remembered that. She nodded again.

"There are several kinds of Christians," she said. "I don't know much about it, but there seem to be some who aren't so strict as others. They're different to us. Anne's a Catholic, and they're awfully strict. But some Christians—I know heaps of girls, not a bit like that. But it's different with us." Sadie stopped, looking serious.

Ivan laughed.

"I don't care a damn," he said. "Our religion doesn't worry me. But then, of course, I'm not really a Jew."

Sadie looked at him doubtfully.

"You're half a one," she objected.

Ivan shrugged.

"Oh, well, yes. But that sort of thing never makes any impression on me."

"No, I know. You don't even keep the Pasch," Sadie said.

Ivan threw up his hands at the bare idea.

"Pasch," he said. "No! Not, mind you, that I've the slightest objection to that sort of thing for other people. An amazing number of various kinds of human beings do seem to be extraordinarily religious. Look at your own people, for instance, even Monty. Even my father feels it incumbent upon him to show up at the synagogue sometimes, and if ever a man believes in religion as a matter of spirit rather than practise he does. Oh, no, I should say it's an excellent thing for the temperament that feels the need of the outlet. It's the same with Anne. I shouldn't like it if she didn't go to Mass, it's part of her personality, but for me"—Ivan shook his head—"I can do without it."

Sadie eyed him with sympathetic incomprehension.

"Of course it's different for you," she conceded. It was the inevitable concession that had been arrived at with extreme unwillingness in the family, at the conclusion of every discussion concerning Ivan, since the hour of his birth. Sadie brought it out once more, through sheer force of habit, and she said it mournfully in the tones she had heard and had come to know were to be associated with the theme. It was different for Ivan.

There was silence. Then Ivan glanced at his watch and rose.

"I say, it's getting late. I suppose your mother thinks it's all settled by now. Well, I must say I'm awfully pleased we've had this talk. I think we understand each other much better now. Thanks for all your advice."

He lit a fresh cigarette and went to the window. "I wonder if I can see my Uncle Julius coming home from an honest day's toil, and Monty. When I see dear old Monty coming round the corner I'm going to wave. It's sure to please him, and he wants all the pleasure in life he can get."

He stood at the window staring out . . . but far from seeing Uncle Julius and Monty, he saw nothing at all, for he was deep in thoughts of the Anne whom Sadie had, by a few crude touches, brought before him. The Anne who was waiting, lonely and puzzled, down in the country now, for him to come. And to come, not with a thousand excuses and objections and qualifications, but simply because he wanted her, and cared nothing for all the rest, and he considered, too, himself as Sadie again had shown him, "It's you who are hard to please, Ivan." Nothing more conclusive than that had ever come to him—the truth. And it was strange that not all the years of his life, not his mother, not the War, not one of his experiences had had the power to show him that simple truth. Only Sadie Weinher, in a few halt sentences, could make things plain.

Sadie, still in her corner of the sofa, watched almost without knowing what she did, the tall figure at the window, and her reflections passed through her mind, like sails across a horizon, and all at once she remarked, "Your mother would have been glad about Anne."

Ivan made no answer, still staring with unseeing eyes across the road.

"She always liked Anne," Sadie continued. "I noticed that at once. She liked her being a Catholic. Funny that."

Ivan was listening now.

"Why funny, specially?" he asked.

Sadie laughed.

"Oh, I don't know. Only I always did think your mother would have liked to be one herself. Just the sort of odd thing she used to be so interested in. She loved all those Catholic pictures. You know, paintings. 'Virgin and Child.' Things like that."

"That's Art," said Ivan. "Not Catholic pictures. You need not have the slightest leanings towards Catholicism to care for Botticelli. Sympathy with the teachings of Confucius is not necessary to cultivate a proper taste in Chinese embroidery."

"Oh, no," Sadie agreed, "I know. Only . . ." She stopped, then with a shrug finished: "I don't know. I always thought she would have liked to be one, somehow." She got up.

"Well, I must go and see what mother is doing. Excuse me. Go and do what you like, Ivan. You know we've got a billiard table. Anything. Make yourself at home." She went out.

Ivan, still looking out of the window, smiled slightly to himself.

"Her perceptions are really extraordinary," he thought. "One is almost inclined to wonder if she can be such a fool as she looks."

CHAPTER XVI

EXPLOITING BEREAVEMENT

ANNE could have been very happy in Worcestershire. She lived in a little old house of ruby brick, with Elizabethan chimneys and a garden, old, herbed and lawned and altogether delightful. A pleasant little house, with the sitting-room window-sills almost down to the ground, and deep window seats and as much of the right kind of furniture as she could desire. And her father said to her one morning (he was exceedingly good to her, and glad in the possession of her), "We must have a sundial for that small lawn; it wants one, and I want to settle down here for good now." For Mr. Hurst had a mind that worked on the right lines, and to him, no doubt, the notion of buying a sundial for a small lawn, an old worn thing to tell the passing of his hours, was good and proper, and suggestive of the last comfortable stages of well-earned prosperity. Just as one purchases a good, strong alarm clock, when at the foot of the ladder it is imperative that one rises in good time. It was not that he would have dreamt of relying upon anything so primitive as a sundial instead of a clock, but there was something . . . subtle. He had come home and bought an old house, and it was right to have the correct accompaniments. Then Anne, besides her various other possessions such as a father and a sundial, had a brown pony and trap, and, entirely for herself, three views. The one from the sitting-room of just plain Worcestershire, fields and hedgerows rising away from the house and over the hill into unbelievable distances; one from her bedroom of Worcestershire holding

the far corner of Warwickshire, as if it didn't know what to do with it, with a red-roofed house in the middle distance that the morning sunlight made like a dull gem caught in the breast of a green dress, a great spread of fields and fallow, with many sheep; and from the landing window she could see the woods to one side, and down in a hollow, the village, church spire and bridge across the river; and besides all this treasure, she had but to go out to find the whole wide countryside her own. So really she might very easily have been happy. But nevertheless she was not. For she kept thinking to herself: "He will not come again. Of course not. He will forget. He will be tired of all the waiting, and think it not worth while. He is gone for ever." And she thought how wise she had been to keep so firm on that day of young summer and love, how well she was disentangled from endless trouble, and having most painstakingly thought this, she would wander about in all the misery of what seemed inevitable irrevocability. For what did it matter that she was safe and had done so thoroughly the right thing, since having done so, she had lost all happiness? Since, having lost, she wanted, with ever-increasing longing, not forgetfulness, not even reward for her sacrifice, not anything save Ivan. Ivan, unreasonable, self-centered, serious-eyed, with the line of perplexity between his brows and the petulance of being thwarted on his lips. If only to see him for a minute. To hear him say once more, "What does it matter, Anne, if you love me?" Ivan at her side again, just himself, coming in his own way, full of his dear, futile ideas, to tell her once more that he loved her, wanted her, could not live without her. But he would never come. Standing in the orchard in the wet, ragged, leaf-rotten grass, she would raise her tired face to the bare brown branches all beaded with splitting buds, to the cold March air, and the March blue sky, patchy and jagged through the trees, and tell herself over and over again that he would not come, that it was better

so, since no happiness, it seemed, could result from his coming, that she would not—and she shut her teeth firmly on the word—would not see him again. Hoping that the constant reminder would accustom her to the fact. But instead, with the reiterations, a pain grew within her that never ceased. The desire to see him, only just to see him once again. For hunger is without exaction or reason, and the gnawing ache of insatiable longing overlooks all far-reaching plans, the consideration of ways and means, and the consulting of common sense or the natural course of events. Passion denied turns on its own strength, and comes back pathetic, easily satisfied. To know once more the reality of presence, to touch, to devour with the eyes and gain relief for their straining; to know and rest in the warmth of that knowledge; to love not the air, which is unyielding and stares so horribly, mercilessly, but the loved one near again; to lie, not even in the arms of the loved one, but even in the happy presence; to have peace at last. Thus Anne dragged slowly round the recurring hours, and found occupation, last resource of the sane mind, merely a deadly means of prolonging them. But unless the look in her eyes bore testimony to her state, there was no other sign.

"You're really happy down here, Anne?" her father asked doubtfully one day.

"I love it. You are, aren't you?"

"I?"—Mr. Hurst did not know enough to press the question further—"Oh, I'm happy enough. This is what I wanted. A nice, quiet time. But it struck me you were looking a bit fagged."

Anne laughed at once.

"I like it all tremendously," she answered. "Do I look fagged? Perhaps it's—well, it might be the spring-time, mightn't it? Anyway, I feel all right."

Mr. Hurst eyed her for a moment, with worrying uncertainty. Nothing would have disappointed him more than the feeling that she, his young daughter, was not con-

tent, or, even worse, was not, for some reason, gaining full benefit from what, to him, seemed the most undoubtedly healthy existence of any—a country life. Something, he sensed rather than saw, was wrong. But what, he could not even conjecture. It never occurred to him to think of one quite possible explanation: that she had fallen in love. He was that type of person, incapable, save under the strongest persuasion, of considering women, especially daughters, as likely to be in love. One heard of a lot of nonsense with young men, Mr. Hurst knew, and thanked his lucky stars that Anne was not a young man, but the idea of his own daughter pining away in a *grande passion* would have simply horrified him. Not Anne! Of course she was a pretty girl, and he had had to leave her alone rather too much; but—love! Not yet, surely! And besides, who on earth could she have been meeting, in any case? Love! Mr. Hurst approached the term, rather as a fairly experienced terrier would approach a doubtful but undeniably attractive bone, nosing it suspiciously. Love! A catastrophe! Mr. Hurst would have been most perturbed. So he bought her a nice puppy of good, reliable pedigree, and hoped for the best.

"This," said Anne to herself, as she looked from her window over the great breadths of countryside, lying fair and pale, under a thin gold sun, "is becoming quite impossible. I am deteriorating sadly. After behaving with extreme foresight, and really exceptional common sense, not long ago, I have in a short time become positively maudlin. I represent the whole category of love-lorn maidens ever invented. 'A poor soul sat sighing 'neath a sycamore tree, oh, willow, willow!' Anything like that applies perfectly to me. And I thought I really possessed more sanity! I really must adjust my attitude. And besides, it's a shame to worry poor father. I will take my puppy and go for a walk." There lay some rare quality in Anne. She was so seldom given to any form of self-deception.

So she smiled bravely across the fields and turned to her mirror. Therein a strange girl eyed her sadly. A ghostly thing. White arms, white face, and a glinting haze of golden hair. "I'm beginning to look dead," she said to the reflection. "And that's silly when I'm alive and likely to remain so for some time!" And the stranger returned her stare gravely, as a person will who has nothing to say in reply.

Anne smiled at it reassuringly, and donned a green tunic, silver-belted. Then, with a glance to the window, she reflected and decided she might as well go. So she put on a coat and went down through the quiet house, out into the garden to the gate.

From his room where he lay, well protected from any conceivable shaft of untempered sunlight by green blinds, Mr. Hurst heard the distant barking of an excited puppy, and the tread of a step on the gravel. "Going for a walk," he thought drowsily. "Let's hope it will do her good. She's not happy." He went to sleep, dwelling vaguely upon this unlooked-for calamity, and dreamt that Anne was standing in black before him, saying again and again, "Happy? What is happiness? Tell me. I can't be happy till I know." But it was a hazy unreal dream, and left little impression upon him.

Ivan found the way to be all down a low-rutted lane, narrow between hedges. With caked cart-tracks and drying winter mud, and the wet still oozing from the hoof-prints. Good old gates barred wide views of furrowed fields, and the sky was blue with little dark cloud-stains, bright-edged and opalescent, as the sun shone. He swung round and on down the twisted lane, brisk with the buoyancy of certainty. He was feeling quite sure that now at last things were going to be as he would have them. Before, he had felt just as confident, but then things had been different. Now, his mother was dead, he was ter-

ribly alone, and on these grounds, if no others, Anne would scarcely have the heart still to refuse him.

It is a strange nature that makes quite unashamedly of bereavement an exploitation. Weak, perhaps, but possibly simple and sensible. After all, what better grounds for making a complaint than that one has been deprived? Who, going for a second time to try love again, would not, at heart, consider aggrievedly how, though it might have been different before now, in loneliness and sorrow, there lay a most justifiable right to expect kindness. And who, save a very unsentimental, straightforward being, would dare to admit the thought?

"Don't for heaven's sake think I want pity. Don't love because you happen to be touched!" How many lovers have indignantly so cried? Thus basing love upon a strange pride. But only a most primitive self-possession will seize anything, even poverty, even loss, even shame, and, garnishing it up that it may better please, bring it along to add persuasion to the plea. Ivan, determining that Anne was worth a fresh endeavor, decided that if anything could avert a second tragedy, it would be his mother's death. And then, of course, Anne would see his remarkable constancy, his sincerity, in that he could not forget her, but came, still with his vow of adoration, and she would make no demur. So went Ivan, adventurer, striking left and right at the hedges with his stick, thinking enjoyably of the first moment when he would see her again. Perhaps he would come upon her somewhere, be able to advance quietly and take her unawares. She knew nothing of his coming: how pleased and glad she would be to see him suddenly, like that! He would say, "Hullo, Anne!" or something ordinary like that, and she would start and look, silent with surprise, then smile, that dear smile, full of her lovely quiet pleasure.

Very upright and lordly, with a condescending but ap-

preciative eye for the country around, Ivan went to find his love. "My heart is like a singing bird, whose nest is in a water-shoot," he hummed lightly to himself. Anne! What a name! Anne Hurst!

A Schenstein in ecstasy. And this was where she lived. This, of course, was where she lived. This cold, sweet, fresh lane, these fields were her very personality. He came to a gate with a path that wound away from it, between bushes and a little grass plot at each side to, no doubt, an invisible house. Her house. Ivan stopped at the gate, looking up the path. And as he looked, she came round the corner—Anne! Anne walking with her head turned to the ground, a dog at her heels. She looked up. Ivan leant on the gate, keeping it shut, as she came towards him, staring. "Hullo, Anne," he said.

As, with bated breath and eyes staring down the lane whither he had gone, she held, nearly fainting, on to the gate that had banged so sharply a minute ago, Anne felt that she had scarcely the strength or the courage or the feelings left, to care very much.

Looking back on all that had happened in one short hour, since he walked with her over the lawn to the lilac trees, and then, later, with one bitter denunciation turned and walked away, Anne felt as if she had been visited by some fearful nerve-racking nightmare, that now, just waked, wrenching herself from the terrifying sleep, she sat up breathless, staring wildly into the dark. It could not have happened! Not again! He had gone as he had left her that other time. Only now it was far, far worse. For she had seemed really unreasonable, really cruel. And he had not understood at all, but flung away, wounded, angered, filled with resentment. With her elbows on the gate, Anne stood, head in hands, trying to gather her racing, bounding, stampeding thoughts. Ivan was gone! For a long time she stood there, motionless, at the gate. Then,

slowly she walked back, stopped a moment, looking at the place where, so happy, she had led him only an hour ago, then turned and made her way to her room. She lay on her bed, and by and by, with the remorseless tenacity of memories, the thought of how it had all happened began to come to her and she went through it all again.

At first, when she saw him she had been overjoyed, overwhelmed with gladness to know that he had not forgotten, had sought her out. Walking together up through the garden to some spot where they could talk undisturbed, she had thought how he had come at last, and it would certainly be all right, after all her misery. Taking it for granted that he had changed, that she would no longer have to object to his proposals. And it never dawned upon her that he could return, with almost the identical plans that had cost them both so much on that first afternoon. Then, standing facing each other by the budding lilacs, he had begun with wondrous gravity and the most reassuring air of resolution to tell her how he had tried and tried and found he could not live without her. That everything was dreadful at home, that his mother was dead, and he knew now she, Anne, was more important to him than any of the petty considerations he had so weakly allowed to stand in the way before. Would she ever forgive that? The appeal sounded so genuine and true. She had stared at him wide-eyed, wonderingly, yet without a shadow of doubt that the miracle of his changed point of view must have happened, that he saw her position at last.

"So we can be married at once, Anne. Anne, I do love you! Doesn't it show how much that I'm here now? Dearest, I wanted you before; now—how much more do I want you now! My father . . ." and he had gone on, describing with vivid realism the depressing atmosphere of desertion, the lugubrious mourning for the dead, with, running all the while underneath, that current of relief. The family's burden at last out of the way. "It's stifling, Anne.

You can guess how stifling it is!" And he had said how glad he was to be with her once more, how he had missed her, how beautiful she was, his beloved, his charming queen —she, the only one who could understand how dreadful his mother's death had made things—and they would be married at once. And she had looked at him with pity, filled with love and sympathy.

But when he began to explain what he would now do in order to render their marriage possible, with horrified doubt, then sick realization, she had seen that really, beyond a few added promises—"I don't care a bit, Anne, any more; I've just about come to the end of it; if he doesn't like it, he'll just have to put up with it; I'll do anything you like"—and so on, beyond such wholesale declarations she was faced with exactly the same proposal as that which she had managed before to refuse. He would do anything, only not the one thing that mattered. And when she looked dubious, when she would make no reply, he stared at her in amazement. "I'll work fearfully hard: later we shall be quite independent. We needn't say anything about your being a Catholic, I'll get round the Church business; after all, that can't matter so very much." They sprang out, sentence after sentence, glib and light, from Ivan's heedless lips. Anne listened, trying to concentrate on this significance and that, as the old tale wound along, and the old futility showed up so plainly. He had not changed. Still that deadly influence, the matter of dependence held him in its deceptive grip; still, despite his fulsome protestations, in his heart Ivan complained, "Well, you can't expect me to do everything, Anne. You're rather unreasonable, I must say!"

Never understanding that she asked nothing but freedom, that he asked everything of her.

Lying on her bed, dry-eyed, rigid with the misery of it all, Anne considered that the root of the trouble must lie in the complete differing of their standards and points of

view. Ivan did not think his family, the life he led amidst that family, their ambitions and ideas, terrible. He might be annoyed, disgusted, sickened, but never, in the sense that she was, repulsed.

To live right among them, so long as he might always have the wish of the moment without interference, did not appal him. How could it? Was he not of themselves? And indeed only from his mother did he inherit even the annoyance, the disgust. He simply could not see the substance of her objections. That she, Anne, would be in the most hopeless bondage, a Christian, dependent on, and in close contact with, those who distrusted and hated her, and who held forces against her, puzzled and amused him, as absurd. That she could talk of religion and beliefs as an obstacle between them, was simply beyond him. A difference in outlook. The bone of contention of every quarrel in life. "You mean to say you won't?" he had demanded, eyeing her with perfect, blank surprise, and her low toned "I can't, Ivan," had turned him away, to stand and kick the gravel, with head bent, frowning.

"Anne, I can't understand you!" he had said at last. "That's just it," she had cried. "If you only could, you'd see why it is so impossible." "But what's so impossible?" He had stopped and taken her by the shoulders and stared into her face. "Look here, I'm not asking one single thing of you. I've given you everything now. Even said we'd marry in your Church. You know you'll be free to follow your religion. You must know no one could possibly interfere with you. I want you, you—I do believe you want me, then what in God's name is the matter? What's my family, my father, got to do with you? And just because I happen up till now to have been in a sense dependent upon him, and hundreds are in my position, and glad to be, *that's* no reason against our marrying. He won't hurt us. He won't know anything about us. And later I shall have everything for myself, and you'll be

glad then that I stopped with the Firm and didn't start playing drama and getting cut off with a shilling or something. You allow your imagination to run away with you. That's what it is." Yes, that's what it was, her imagination. Anne turned round and stared up at the ceiling as she considered the illimitable flights of that imagination. The ageing Mr. Schenstein, growing more and more cantankerous and crotchety with his years, still in power, still, after the manner of a thousand other old owners, keeping a self-willed eye upon his possessions, counting among them, one, most important, his son.

And Ivan, still in the same position—for why more independent then than now? Imagination indeed knew no bounds at the thought of such circumstances. Evelyn Schenstein all over again. And yet Ivan was incapable of seeing it. So they had gone on. He arguing, she saying no, no, over and over again. All the heartrending stages of that other time. The pleading, the coaxing, the burst of anger, the remorse, and then at last, worse than the sad parting at the Weinhers' gate, he had stood over her, nostrils elevated, and sarcastic, smiling mouth. "Oh, well, Anne, you evidently don't attach the importance to our marrying that I do. I have allowed you every point, you still talk of impossibility and futility. Marriage for us, in the light you view it, would indeed turn out a failure. We shall never arrive at any satisfactory understanding. In the circumstances, I think, there can be no more to be said. I'd better go." And he had gone, without another word, vanished over the lawn, behind the bushes, leaving her alone and deserted under the lilac tree.

Then the gate crashed to, and at the sound she had run, run down the path and stood, to cry out, to do she knew not what, anything, that he might turn back again. But the lane bent sharply near by, and the "Ivan" she called died in the silence of the little empty road. And so she had leant on the gate, with her face in her hands, not weep-

ing, only hiding in lonely anguish from the light and brightness of day.

Now, prostrate on her bed, Anne faced with awful calm the thought of a life that seemed doomed to be for ever unfulfilled. And the alternative had been Ivan and a life that would have sapped her very soul.

If Mr. Hurst, old and just emerging from the light, weary slumber of age and tiredness, could have known how his daughter lay, staring, white and unseeing, up at the ceiling, frail and still as poor stricken Death, he would have worried dreadfully, thinking what a problem a daughter was. And had he known that she was in love and denied love only through some religious objection, he would have been very puzzled indeed.

CHAPTER XVII

FANTASIA

OVERWHELMED with surprise and resentment Ivan returned to town in a mood of violence, and sought instinctively his natural solace in times of trial. The mind seething with ill-suppressed passion is a bad receptacle for the vapors of an intoxicant. It is drunk enough already. Ivan returned home from his club to Berkeley Square that night having attained that stage of inebriety when heat is in-driven, and ferments. He felt dull and vague, oppressed with a deep sense of grievance, though exactly what grievance he could no longer recall with any certainty. He only knew as he mouched moodily along by the railings that he had suffered, from some cause or other, exceedingly bad treatment, that the world was a hard, unloving, unjust place, with no softness anywhere, and that women, for some obscure reason, were worse than hell. He stumbled just a little going up the steps, swore intensely, and fitted his key into the lock with great precision, for he knew from long experience that if he could only get it accurately in, first try, and without difficulty, it showed he was all right—all right.

He stood looking about in the quiet dim-lit hall. Letters, the late post. He stared down at them sleepily. The dining-room door was half open, showing an angle of dark. He took off his hat and coat and scarf slowly, and placed them neatly on top of each other, on a chair. He stood listening, assimilating gently the breath of solitude and desertion in the air. A moment longer, standing, ashen-faced under the greenish glow of the light, then,

"No one in," he muttered, and walked towards the stairs, forgetting the letters completely. He mounted without haste, and paused on the landing. The drawing-room door. Closed. An impulse of misty perversity induced him to open it. When Ivan was but ever so slightly inebriated he invariably wanted to alter everything, if only a closed door. He looked in, and some one, seated by the fireplace, under the lamp, moved sharply. He stood on the threshold, smiling, for there, unless he were much mistaken, was Sadie. Good old Sadie. Of course. And she appeared to be talking, rapidly.

"Oh, Ivan, is that you? I didn't hear you come up. I'm so glad you've come. I've been here ages."

Ivan remained at the door, taking in the idea of Sadie, sitting by the fireplace, then he shut the door carefully, and came forward, with scarcely a sway. "Sadie," he said, "hullo!"

Sadie glanced, then looked at him keenly.

"Mother wanted me to come," she said. "It's father. She's so upset. He was coming home early to-night for certain; we had a few people, and he was going to be home for dinner, and he never came. We phoned his club and everywhere we could think of, but he isn't anywhere, and every one's gone, and mother doesn't know what to do. She said, 'Go round and see if he's doing anything with Uncle Solomon.' But your father's out too. I can't think what's happened. He always lets us know if he's kept out unexpectedly. He knows how mother worries." Sadie stopped. "It's not that it's so late," she resumed. "But he was so certain he'd be home. I can't understand it."

Ivan stood against the sofa-end, eyeing her as she spoke.

"Isn't he home yet?" he inquired.

Sadie returned his gaze. And when she saw the peculiar white heaviness of his face, and his eyes black, quite black in the hazy light and glowing at her, she became very composed.

"No," she said clearly. "I came here to look for him."

"His club," suggested Ivan. "Why not?"

"He isn't there, because we've phoned."

Ivan was silent a moment, then:

"Well, he'll be all right," he said.

"Oh, Ivan, yes, of course he will. But it's funny, when he said . . ."

"My father seems to be out too," said Ivan suddenly, "perhaps he's with him. Well, they'll take care of themselves. Don't you worry. They'll be all right. I tell you what! Send old Monty after him. Monty'll find him. He's good at finding things. He'll bring him back."

He chuckled amusedly, and rocked a little against the sofa. Sadie looked at him again. "He is drunk," she thought to herself. "And he's white. That's a bad sign. Beast! I shan't stop!"

"Well," she said, beginning to fasten her coat, "I only really came to see if I could find out anything here. I'd better be getting back to mother. Perhaps he'll be there when I get in. We did phone here earlier in the evening, and no one was in then, they said. I simply had to come out to see for myself. It's so worrying. I do hope he'll be there."

Ivan dropped heavily on to the sofa, and regarded her smilingly. Sadie made to rise, but he put out a hand:

"Why go yet?" he suggested. "He'll be home by now all right. My father's not at home either. I'm lonely."

Sadie got up. . . .

"Oh, no," she said anxiously, "I must go, Ivan." She looked down upon him. "Really."

"It's not late, Sadie." Ivan pressed persuasively, staring up at her.

"It's quite late enough. And I'm tired. Besides, there's father."

"*He's* all right, I'm not worrying about mine. Mine's

always out. I don't think anything of it. You might stay, Sadie."

Sadie looked down at him again. She felt contemptuous, but indulgent, and a little disturbed. There was something so strangely tall and big about Ivan, and, sunk down on that sofa in the queer half-light, his hair looked tremendously thick and black, weird-looking. And she was struck suddenly by the expression in his eyes.

"Oh, don't be such a fool!" she told him brusquely. "I can't stay."

"You can," insisted Ivan. "I'm awfully lonely."

"You look it!" Sadie assured him, "No."

"Oh, don't look at me like that!" Ivan begged. "I don't like it. It isn't like you, Sadie. I thought you were always so nice and kind. Don't stare at me so crossly."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she told him severely.

"Ashamed?" Ivan repeated mildly, albeit his voice was a trifle blurred. He stretched out an arm suddenly, and Sadie, who had been standing nearer than she had thought, found it was longer than she would have considered possible. He held her wrist in a grip that was the reverse of unsteady. "Go on, Sadie, you might stay."

Sadie was trying to wrench herself free.

"Don't be such a fool, Ivan!" she cried. "Let me go. You are a fool." The habit of quarreling with Montague and her own particular method of self-defense always made Sadie resort to abuse. "I tell you I must go."

"Oh, no," Ivan said softly. "Not yet. Your mother knows where you are, if that's what's worrying you."

"But she's waiting to hear about father, you silly ass."

"He's home now."

"I don't know so much." Sadie still struggled desperately. "And in any case, I'm not going to stay here now. Don't be so silly, Ivan. You ought to be in bed. Let me go."

"Not till you sit down again. Why do you want to run away from me, Sadie? I thought we were friends."

"Run away!" she said scornfully. "What next! Why do you think I'd want to run away from you? Don't be so mad!"

But Ivan, still looking at her intently, jerked her arm in a coaxing sort of manner, and Sadie, somewhat to her own surprise, sat down. She felt she could deal with him better with her wrist free, even if she must give in in the matter of re-seating herself. And besides, there was something about Ivan suggestive of many things. She was beginning to think that her father must indeed have returned by now, and Ivan was drunk, so evidently a fool. He might say anything. She would feel the better ever afterwards for having seen him just once in this silly condition, with his lips all smiling, and his funny eyes glittering so! He was a poor thing!

There was a flutter like wings about Sadie's heart, but knowing him now definitely to be her inferior, she did not feel an atom afraid. For a minute to stop and see what she could make him say! It would be a consolation and a triumph to her dying day. And, so base and carnal are even the purest after ten o'clock, she had forgotten completely Anne Hurst, who was engaged to Ivan, who would have shuddered to see him in such a state. Only she kept thinking, "Well, he'll be sorry later on. He is a fool!" She turned to look at him full, but her gaze dropped; there was something too fascinating in his eyes, a peculiar soft stir in them, like slowly crumpling velvet. "What disgusting brutes men were!"

"That's right," he said. "Now we can talk. I'm glad you came. It's quiet in here, isn't it?"

"Very," she assented. Very quiet. With the empty retired hush of night. In the distance traffic still rolled, out of the silence came the intermittent hoot of cars, like the cry of giant night birds, sweeping and swooping and dying

away, but in the room the silence seemed real and deep enough to live. Live and sigh and breathe and whisper, and sleep. And, Sadie turned her head, outside a great, wide, peaceful sky. Deep blue and soft, warm, scattered with tiny stars, a warm sweet night. Very quiet. She turned again. Ivan was silent, staring somberly into the grate.

"I've had a rotten day," he said at last.

He shook his head solemnly. "Rotten," he repeated. Sadie said nothing. She glanced at the clock, ticking away to itself, with a little contented, self-contained tick. Nearly one—not so late then—her watch was out a bit. There was a car approaching, coming nearer, nearer. Was it going to stop here? Her father—Uncle Solomon—he'd know something. But the sound receded dully into the distance, and the silence settled once more.

"It's really very extraordinary," came Ivan's slow, uncertain voice again. "Everything's gone wrong."

Sadie laughed.

"Oh, you're in a bad way," she said comfortably. "What did you have for dinner?"

Ivan shook his head very seriously, and suddenly fixed his eyes upon Sadie's superb hands clasped round her ample knees. Sadie felt that gaze as if a hot finger were pressing into her, and felt it, could locate it, traveling all up the outline of her arms, up, exploring but uncritical till it stopped again, fastened, more like a wasp now, settled on the edge of a jam dish, on her neck. Acutely embarrassed, she shifted uncomfortably, and began to fidget her feet. Instantly Ivan's eyes moved down to her legs, and remained there morosely.

He said a few things after a time. Amorous insinuations, rambling, oddly mingled with touches of self-pity, reproach, and hints of some great, hopeless disappointment. Sadie listened, glancing at him now and then with disgusted enjoyment. He managed to look very handsome, in

a fallen, dissipated sort of way, and he kept trying to draw her nearer to his side. She thought it was all very funny. "Sadie," it came in a hot whisper, "Sadie, darling, you aren't unkind, are you? You're a nice girl, Sadie. Isn't everything sad? Sadie. Sadie." The voice was full of entreaty. "Sadie, dearest, you've got lovely hands."

She looked at them mechanically. They weren't so bad. She let him have one, watching, dreamily, while he moved the rings slowly round and round. He looked up.

"Sadie, what's your opinion of love? No, I mean life,—no, love?"

"A little goes a long way," she answered shortly. She was a bit hot, and—all this fingering. She wasn't sure that it was worth it. She wasn't there to make herself cheap, and the man wasn't entirely responsible. It seemed silly, with any one of so little account.

"A little goes a long way," said Ivan slowly. "Yes, that's quite right." Then, "There's something I wanted to tell you, Sadie. Something about"—he thought for a moment—"about Anne. She doesn't . . ." he stopped suddenly as if pulled up by discretion, and shook his head, with a gaze fixed into space. "She's a wonderful girl, you know."

"Anne!" thought Sadie, conscience stricken. "What would she say to this?" And she drew away from the long regular strokes. "I know she is," she agreed warmly. She bent a disapproving eye upon him. "She's a lot too wonderful for you!"

Ivan nodded contentedly.

"Yes," he agreed, and he took her arm again, and eyed it. "I haven't been very nice to you always, have I, Sadie?"

"You've been all right." Another car was coming round the corner. Could that be the one?

"No," said Ivan in decided contradiction, resenting the assertion, "I haven't." He touched her neck and Sadie

turned quickly. It felt like lips, that sudden soft touch, and was bewildering, like an unexpected kiss.

"Here!" she began. But Ivan took in all her face, with unmoved composure, and her half-indignant expostulations were lulled in the warmth of that stare. She lay in her corner of the sofa, quiet, unthinking, only faintly uneasy, pleasantly tired, contentment stealing over her, with soothing and rest, a few stray thoughts wandering across her mind, and now and then a delicious sickening within her as the strange, unaccustomed presence so close to her stirred and murmured and sighed. And suddenly she remembered herself as a fat little girl, with two enormously thick pigtails of hair, flying in panic from a tall little boy, in hot pursuit, who intended either pulling her unfortunate long hair very hard, or else depositing some species of unpleasant insect down her back. That, then . . . and now . . . Sadie turned with an involuntary smile to Ivan. "Oh," she said in rich tones, "you are silly!"

"I'm not," Ivan murmured. "I'm thinking how beautiful you are."

Sadie wriggled, but, for once, did not bring out an instant contradiction. The first time. "I shall be able to remember this!" she thought exultantly. "He will be sorry!" The storing up of a weapon against future humiliations was a good excuse. Sadie took it gladly. She found it all very gratifying. It was impossible not to.

"Your neck's just like the inside of a shell. A lovely, broad, round shell, milk and pale inside, like satin."

"You are poetic!" Sadie interpolated self-consciously. But she subsided, and listened with half-closed eyes, to the voice that seemed to wind on and on for ever, like a river flowing at evening, like a spell woven about her head, like a web spun over her eyes, like an endless fascinating story. Lying there in the pretty soft light, in an atmosphere poppied and halcyon as a drug, and something subtle, vital,

alive, moving, a thrill at her side. Something uncertain, moving like fingers under velvet, countless tiny insinuations, impulses, advances at work, and a queer scent, the rose in her dress, and from his hair, and the windows thrown wide to the fair spring night, and from afar the slow sound of an occasional car. Stolen fruit, to pluck so unexpectedly, rare fruit and luscious, of a truly tropical bloom, while for self-respect's salve, the reminder that he was a poor sort of fool, that she would have the laugh of him by and by. But—rare fruit. Sadie gave herself up to the enjoyment of it.

But there are boundaries. The gentle voice went on, and for a moment Sadie's drowsed senses listened, without realization, to his assuming her keen disappointment at his engagement to another girl, and reminder that it was a night made but for love and too good, much, much too good to be wasted. Then, coming suddenly out of her stupefaction, she pushed him away, sprang to her feet, and stood staring down at him, cheeks flushed, eyes burning, roused at last to a sense of keen affront.

"Oh, thanks!" she cried. "Thanks very much! I'll bear it in mind! Any time you're passing I suppose! And who told you I was so keen? Who told you I was so disappointed? You know a lot, Ivan Schenstein. You think every one's bound to be mad on you, don't you? Well, here's something new. I'm not. See? I've got some pride left, I hope How dare you talk to me like that! Just because I let you, drunk too, play the fool a bit? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What do you think Anne would say to this? What do you take me for, Ivan Schenstein? A damn silly fool, I should think! I've a good mind to write and tell Anne. You want teaching a lesson, you do!"

Ivan looked up at her, with a sweet untroubled smile. "That's all off," he said suddenly, clearly. "She won't have me now."

Sadie surveyed him, somewhat at a loss. "All off?" she said.

Ivan regarded her pleasantly, "All off," he repeated. "Finished."

"Well," Sadie gave him one more look and turned to go, "I don't wonder. Anne's wise! And so you thought, being at a loose end, you might as well get some fun out of me? Second best! Half a loaf better than no bread!" She was at the door. "I'm going. I've got something better to do than be"—she became very expressive. "So there! That's right, you lie there and have a good sleep, you look as if you want one. And next time you think you'll laugh at me, remember silly Sadie, who didn't feel inclined. Chin—chin!"

And Sadie banged the door.

Ivan lay, turning over in his brain the fact that she was no longer present. He got it at last, and he grinned secretly and happily; then gathering as many cushions together as were within reach, he placed them all under his head, and went straight off to sleep, simply and calmly, as one who has done well, and is tired and has no qualms.

Quiet in the deadening hush slept Ivan Schenstein. The lamp-light spread over him gently, for a shaded light forgives all wrongs, and she took him, the tired young gallant, into her arms. Deeper and deeper grew the hush. Against the pillows he lay, his face flushed and rosy under the glow, with his dark lashes so still that he might have been dead. Flung all across the sofa, one arm beneath his head lay Ivan, peacefully breathing, the very personification of assured and shameless youth. Lacking conscience, principles or sense of responsibility, a most depraved, degenerate young man. Yet withal so warm of heart that he loved a woman dead, and a woman living with undying tenacity; so firm of purpose that he had pressed once more a suit; so weak of head, that in unreasonable disappoint-

ment he sought confidence in wine, and comfort later for his thwarted desire. A deep, intensely real young man, yet of the smallest knowledge of the realities of life; a very fond and foolish young man, a vain constructor of false idols to pander to his affronted self-knowledge and self-respect. A romantic knight ever a-wail on his *Belle Dame sans merci*, ever ready with his excuse of a heartless misunderstanding beauty, presuming on her beauty to make unjust demands. An eager wounded knight at arms! Yet possessing that which made one woman at least unhappy over him. A very selfish, most unfortunate young man!

And as, like the pale glimmer of a white face through a thin curtain, dawn came first to the sky, he awoke to the sound of a voice in his ear, and some one shaking his shoulder. He sat up, staring. Very black against the light stood Burns, the butler, with an agitated face.

"What"—Ivan looked at him—"what's the matter?"

Burns' eyes were fairly starting with anxiety.

"Your father, sir. A man has just come. Your father's been taken ill."

Ivan stared stupidly. He felt very thick and sleepy about the eyes and mouth. "Ill? Why, what's the matter? What's the time? I've been, good Lord, sleeping in here. I've been asleep, Burns. What did you say? Ill? Father? Where is he?"

"Out at Wimbledon, sir. He was taken ill at a gentleman's house, an hour or two ago. They sent up to tell you. He . . ."

Ivan sprang up. "Ill? Is he downstairs, this man? I'll come."

He put his hand to his head. "My word, Burns, I must have been having a late night! I got up here somehow. Been lying here hours I should think. I feel rotten. What did he say happened?"

"Downstairs, the man, sir." Burns eyed young Mr. Schenstein imperturbably. He had all the butler's proper

attitude towards the son of the house. A regard akin to that of the policeman for the undergraduate. A sort of boat-race-night-making-due-allowances benignity, and he could remember being told by the young lady who had come for her father last night, not to wait up, then the return of Ivan some time later, and later still the loud slam of the drawing-room door. And he looked pretty pale about the eyes. There was no end, Burns reflected indulgently, to his goings-on. But he'd find himself obliged to wake up now!

"Downstairs, sir," he said. Ivan made for the door, still holding his head. "Had a job to wake me, didn't you, Burns?" he remarked.

"You were sleeping somewhat heavily, sir, I think. But I knew you would wish to be called."

"Good Lord, yes!" He looked back. "Come too, won't you? I shall have to speak to this man. I mean, you know, I feel a bit dazed still. I'd rather you were there."

"Certainly, sir. If you would care for it." Burns followed sanely.

Mr. Schenstein was rather more than ill. It turned out when Ivan, in evening dress, arrived at the house where his father lay, that he was dead. Had died very quietly, as old men sometimes will die. Fallen sideways, from his chair, sunk to the floor, with an excellent hand of cards scattered about him. Old, tired, but dauntless, playing well up to the last, dying very much in the way he would have died. Without much trouble or disturbance, calm, dignified—the end of a Schenstein!

Ivan, realizing after some explanation, that his father was really and truly dead, stood and studied him, lying on a strange bed, laid out and finished, with the sheet drawn so straightly to his chin. Looked at him, stirred with a slow uneasy regret. His father. A sudden end! To play bridge, and die! He had a rotten head! His father, then, had been spending a late night too, it appeared. And Sadie,

of course, had come round for her father; he, too, only with a difference, he was not dead. "I ought to be dead!" thought Ivan with sudden, stinging compunction. "The poor old chap. And he didn't want to die. I hope he didn't mind it very much."

He lingered but a little while longer, then turned away. His father was dead. And he lay as a reminder of patient, silent reproof, a symbol of reproach. "I die seeing my hopes as yet unfulfilled. You know well how I counted on you. Is my trust to be betrayed?" And that, a tax, and irksome, was too heavy for love. Ivan remembered the obligations, and could not, strive as he honestly did, find any great affection. Full of pity, pathetic makeshift of a regard that it can be, he stole out of the room. And the pain in his head felt more real and true than anything else. A relentless ache.

They were tactful, the people downstairs, sympathetic and reserved; they eyed him, he was aware, curiously, half-fearful, it occurred to him, lest he might perhaps display poignant feeling; ready to be very kind. I'm sorry, he thought, and driven by pain and an acute sense of loss and discomfort to some sort of philosophy, he reflected.

"Dead. I never imagined him dying. There was something so ageless about him. It shows it really is inevitable. That more than mother have to die." And again he remembered his father's invariable concluding reason for the attainment of his desire. "I shan't be likely to live for ever. I can't expect to do that. I want to see things safe. I'm getting old, after all." And he of all who might be supposed would die with his every wish gratified, had seen nothing safe. Tragedy! No drama like unrealized ambition, no loss like unattained desire. The poor old man!

But as he left the house, and started back to town, in Ivan's mind, wellnigh to the exclusion of all else, was a worrying, teasing speculation as to what on earth he could have been fool enough to have said to Sadie the night be-

fore. Coming in, in the state he had, and finding her there. Something had taken place, but what? His bemused brain defied him.

But he felt certain he must have gone quite far enough. Well, it didn't matter perhaps very much. Let it go. She wouldn't tell, for her own sake surely. And there were other, more vital things, to think of now. No time for worrying uselessly over a past night's indiscretions. He needed his wits for present action. With the ghost of a smile he did wonder, however, just what his father, about that time approaching the hour of death, would have said to—to whatever it was had happened. It was a subtle, psychological problem as to whether or not he would have been rather pleased than otherwise.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WILL OF A SCHENSTEIN

"WELL, I'm sure it was most sudden." Mrs. Weinher presided over her somewhat subdued dinner-table, on the evening of the day after Mr. Schenstein died. Every one was there, round the well-covered, excellent board. Mr. Weinher, returned home after a disjointed, bewildering, most unusual day; Montague, who had been taking charge up at the office; Sadie, inarticulate, deeply impressed with the strangeness and extreme peculiarity of events (and she had much to think of) up in the drawing-room at Berkeley Square last night, then rushing home, the urgent message from her father, Mr. Schenstein being dead. It was enough, and too much for her powers of concentration. And Mrs. Weinher, characteristically alert and practical in the crisis—for crisis the whole family well recognized this climax to be—sitting down at the end of a full day employed in looking after everything, seeing that every one did the proper things, keeping an eye upon Julius, whom she had known go even without his lunch in a time of great strain, sending all the messages, busying herself with countless little affairs and urgencies, thoroughly useful and resourceful woman that she was.

So every one was there; some instinct drove them, as a family, to come together, and keep together, holding the front, gathered in their forces at such a time. And the atmosphere was breathless with anticipation. The Head of the Firm—very suddenly dead. Well, he would have left everything all ship-shape and proper, of course, and

Ivan would know at last exactly how and where he stood. On a pretty firm foundation, that need scarcely be said; still, one never quite knew. There had been trouble, Montague had been able to tell them that a long time ago, between those two, father and son; there could not but be a certain amount of conjecturing until they heard definitely. One could not tell, and he, Solomon, had been close enough for anything, and he had a will of his own too. Mrs. Weinher thought there was no saying really, what, in his queer way, he might not take it into his head to do. They would hear the Will. Montague, always better informed than any one else, said he, himself, thought they might hear anything, though further and more lucidly he was chary of explaining. But his slight headshake was full of meaning.

Mrs. Weinher, a keen business woman, told him at once that she didn't think there could be anything like that, and in any case what, after all was said and done, could there be? Ivan, whatever his relations with his father had been, was his father's son. It was simple. "And in any case," she concluded energetically, "I don't see that it's anything to do with us. You'll find Ivan's left in as successor all right. Why not?" But Montague, who knew the why and the wherefore of everything, only grinned his sardonic grin and said nothing.

"Most sudden," Mrs. Weinher said. "Dear me; really it makes one wonder who'll be the next to go, really it does."

In Mr. Weinher's warm, dull eyes burned longing, the deep, unpassioned, calculating ardor of a perfectly practical person of sound ambitions. He had been a subsidiary company for so long, he knew so much worth knowing about the business, his nephew knew nothing and cared less. It would be galling to be subsidiary to Ivan Schenstein, forced to watch him work ruinous havoc in less than no time.

"Where'd you get this salmon?" he asked unpleasantly, looking up with a frown. "It's a bad flavor."

"It's not bad, I hope." Mrs. Weinher glanced up anxiously. "I get it in fresh after lunch, to make sure. If it is, I must speak to . . . Yours is all right, Monty?"

"How much do you pay?" Monty paused with fork in mid-air. "Ten and six a pound? It's not worth that. Oh, it's all right." He carried the fork to his mouth, with that curious smile that always seemed to grow upon him when he ate.

Sadie stared at her brother, wide-eyed and speechless. The little noise of fairly well-bred people consuming food rose and fell about the table like the sound of tiny wheels.

"He didn't give any sign of not feeling as well as usual before, did he?" Mrs. Weinher asked after a time.

Mr. Weinher shook his head, wiping his lips on his napkin.

"Nothing at all. First I knew there was anything wrong, he sat staring a minute at the table, then over he went with the cards still in his hand."

Mrs. Weinher clicked her tongue.

"Extraordinary thing! It must have come on him suddenly."

"Weak heart," observed Montague. "That's what *she* had. They both of them had weak hearts," he added with a scoff in his voice.

Mrs. Weinher shook her head dolefully.

"He never took enough care of himself," she said. "I never thought he did."

Mr. Weinher said nothing. Monty looked up intelligently.

"Don't you think so? I never thought he ran any risks. I used to think he'd go on for ever." He relapsed, and bent his head to his plate again.

Mrs. Weinher regarded her son with slow casual indulgence.

She was silent for a time, as one held on some trend of thought, then, at last, staring at the table with reflective eyes, she said:

"He wasn't so old either."

"Seventy, next birthday," said Mr. Weinher.

"Sixty-nine," Montague put in with faintly irritated sarcasm.

"Sixty-nine," Mrs. Weinher smoothed the cloth. "Well, he certainly didn't look that. Sixty-nine . . ." She shook her head. "And it seems only yesterday . . ."

"I think he looked just that, neither more nor less," Monty carefully scraped round a neatly finished plate.

Mrs. Weinher turned to him, dissentingly. "Oh, no, Monty. You can't say he looked so old. If you take some men . . . Oh, no, he didn't." She turned her eyes to the table, and was away again on her reflections.

Sadie spoke suddenly.

"Well, I don't call sixty-nine old."

"It's not old." Mr. Weinher pushed back his plate. "But it is an age when you've got to begin being careful."

Every one nodded profoundly over this subtle truism. Montague had an extra nod all to himself.

"Ah, yes," he said. "Remember those cigars . . ."

A deep hush descended upon everything. A usually voluble family could think of nothing to say. Then another course was brought in, and Mrs. Weinher said, "Julius, a little apple-charlotte? Sadie, you will. There's the cream, Monty."

The Weinhers dealt solemnly with apple-charlotte. Then the cigarette smoke began to rise up over the table, like smoke from a sacrifice.

Mr. Weinher, mazy and slow in the pleasant haze, shook his head.

"Poor old Solomon," he said. "We shall miss him."

Mrs. Weinher, kind-hearted and sentimental, nodded at him. "Ah," she said, and went off again into retro-

spection. Yes, indeed, poor old Solomon. It was a pity he was dead. And after all it didn't greatly matter that there was so much to be left, that they all had an interest in the leaving. What did matter surely, were those good old times when Solomon had been pleased to drop in and spend many a pleasant evening with them. When they had all been younger, before *she* came with her way of spoiling things, when they had none of them been quite so successful; convivial Streatham Sundays, years ago now, before Sadie was born. What did matter was the unhappiness that had, she knew, come as sure as fate along with that woman and her funny ways. And the son mattered, and his hopes concerning him, and his disappointments, and the way he had always been such a very good Head of the Firm. These things were what mattered, now that he was dead, and one with the long-ago past. So, sitting heavily upright before her empty plate, thought Mrs. Weinher, with pursed lips and sad eyes. And at last, with a scarcely audible sigh, she looked at her daughter, staring raptly, with innocent parted lips into the smoke that rolled out from them. Sadie . . . and there was Sadie. . . . Mrs. Weinher didn't quite know what would happen now.

"Well," she said, "we're going upstairs. Come along, Sadie. Don't be too long, you two."

They climbed the stairs together. Mrs. Weinher with painful labor, breathing heavily. She was beginning to hate stairs.

"I'm tired," she said at the top. "I hope they won't be long. I think I'd like to go to bed. These things upset one. They're a strain."

Sadie said nothing. A strain. Yes, that was it, a strain.

The funeral was conducted in proper orthodox style. For themselves, the Weinhers, without saying much, unanimously agreed that they thought, nowadays, it wasn't really necessary.

The Weinhers did not eat ham, and they kept the Pasch, unless indeed Mr. Weinher, as was often the case, happened to have some particularly important business on hand, rendering his absence from the Firm, if not impossible, at least highly impracticable, and therefore could not abstain from food, or Montague, who seldom kept anything except his money. But otherwise they were broad. Mrs. Weinher would say she didn't know, to become really lax was the last thing she had in mind, but in these days . . . well, while she was proud and glad to call herself a Jewess, she still couldn't help feeling that to be rigorous wasn't expected of them, and there were these nice modern services, really she quite enjoyed going to them. Mr. Weinher would say nothing. Whatever his beliefs might be, he kept them strictly to himself, but he rarely went to the synagogue. He would admit, however, when the subject was raised, a decided difference, perhaps for the worse, in the attitude of his people since his young days, and aver vaguely a general opinion that he didn't think there was much use in making religion so uncomfortable.

Sadie never thought anything about it. She accepted her creed as an inexplicable part of her existence, but she did feel rather noble, after making the extreme sacrifice of a day's fast, once a year. And Montague, that philosopher, only smiled.

Therefore the funeral, carried out with every possible detail of rite and ceremonial, was to them merely the performance of Mr. Schenstein's express desire.

For no man had ever wanted to make a more impressive or definite departure from this world than Mr. Schenstein.

It went off very well, and Mrs. Weinher remarked, really she'd no idea they knew so many people. Friends from far and near. Solomon would have been pleased to see how popular he had always been. And she went upstairs to her room and cried at the sadness and gravity and finality of it all. Never a funeral whether of close con-

nection to herself or not, that did not so affect Mrs. Weinher.

They all went up to the solicitor's office to be present at the reading of the Will. Mr. Weinher, stiff, with a stern expression; Mrs. Weinher, well-dressed, with an air of impersonal but quite tolerant interest, as if she had not especially wanted to come at all, but felt she ought to be present simply as a mark of respect to the revered Dead; Sadie, endeavoring in her unnecessary, mistaken way to display immense interest when, on the other hand, she really had none whatever of any kind. Montague, very long and narrow, tracing little delicate designs with his stick on the floor, sleek-headed, immaculate, with beautifully pointed patent shoes, his face neatly creased into that peculiar unmerry contortion of a smile, waiting. And, leaning negligently back, with an arm for his head, legs crossed, and a cheerful, contented, yet slightly cynical expression, Ivan, conveying that he of all felt the least concerned, perfectly at his ease, a black coat and tie as a concession to mourning, by far the most comfortable of all present.

And then the solicitor, old Hatton, really affected that the curiously attractive old man, who had been to him such a profitable client through thirty years, once he had discovered just the way to get his bills paid within reasonable time, was gone; really sorry that no more would he be called up to assist in the settling of some quaintly abstruse problem, or add his ingenuity to his client's, in the discovery of an outlet to some extraordinarily intricate maze, the while Mr. Schenstein kept reminding him, "what I want you to bear in mind is this . . . what I consider to be most significant is this . . ." and always concluding at last with "Well, I'll leave it to you. Do what you can, and mind, I'm not particular how it's done, but I don't care to have my name anywhere in it . . . I know I can

trust you, Hatton . . ." The dear old fox, who didn't know he could trust any one, who would have been honestly surprised to know that he could trust any one. The solicitor, really sincerely moved that a client who had become almost a habit, was dead. And he wondered, as he slowly and carefully unfolded the stiff crackling foolscap, what these people would think when they heard. He cleared his throat, gave one look over his spectacles and commenced to read.

As a beginning, the business of Schenstein and Son, together with all invested and inherited property, shares and particulars of shares being all detailed with care and exactitude, and any bequests that might at any time fall to Mr. Schenstein, and all personal belongings, were to go to his son, Ivan Solomon, with the small exception of a gold watch and chain, and a pair of diamond and gold cuff-links, which he had much pleasure in bequeathing to his dear cousin and old friend and business partner, Julius Weinher, also to the said Julius Weinher, two or three precisely mentioned possessions, which, being at one time the property of a mutual relation, might be of interest to him and his wife. (Mrs. Weinher's attention strayed for one moment to a grand marble clock and a faded but magnificent photograph album. So they were to have them at last!) Then she listened again. The rest to become the property of his son, Ivan Solomon, to be used and dispensed at his behest, and entirely at his discretion and desire, and to pass in due time into the possession of his heir, or (for Mr. Schenstein had never trusted female ownership) in the event of the absence of a male descendant, the Firm of Schenstein and Son to be the property of the heiress, though under the control of the next male kindred. They deferring in all matters concerning her personally, to the wishes of the owner. But Mrs. Weinher was thinking of "discretion." Had Ivan such a commodity? Evidently Solomon had thought so. Then: "If"—and at the snip

of that tiny syllable, without stirring, every one seemed to stiffen, to tighten, as it were, their powers of attention, to catch it, delicate stiletto that it was, nipping the air, and hold it carefully. "If he, my son and heir, shall see fit to remain a member of the religion or sect into which he was born and reared, and shall not at any time whatsoever or under any circumstances take for his wife a woman, not a member of that sect . . ." The solicitor's voice moved slowly along, and the very silence seemed to hang poised and tense on his words, so deeply and absolutely did every one listen. Even Montague's smile faded, even Sadie ceased to play with her chain. "Should he thus marry, then shall Ivan Solomon Schenstein forfeit, by so disregarding my express desire, all inheritance in my bequests. He shall, in this event, receive, as his exclusive property, the single sum of one thousand pounds sterling, and my business, property and personal effects as heretofore mentioned shall pass to my cousin, Julius Weinher, and his heirs for ever. I, Solomon Isadore Schenstein, in this my last will and testament, do most solemnly adjure and command, that these my final injunctions respecting the apportioning of my possessions be obeyed and performed to the letter." And so it ended, signed, witnessed, and dated.

Mr. and Mrs. Weinher's eyes met, drawn unwillingly in that great moment, to each other. Sadie, her gaze driven irresistibly, stared at Ivan, her face a perfect blank. He was looking at the Will, still in Mr. Hatton's hand, but Montague, with never a glance for any one, sat suavely polishing his nails.

Ivan parted from his relations in the street. "Shall you be in this afternoon?" Mr. Weinher asked him, referring to the office.

"Yes," Ivan said, and dashed away into the Strand. He

found himself, almost without knowing that he had come there, in Inner Temple. It was the lunch-hour, and the courtyards were deserted. They looked quiet and pleasant, and he wanted, badly, somewhere to rest and think in peace.

He found a seat under the plane trees. "Tied," he thought fiercely, "strung up, and made to look a fool! How he had thought of everything! 'See fit to remain a member of the religion or sect in which he was born' "—it was damnable, that any one nowadays could be so bound down to a limit so narrow. " 'Shall not at any time under any circumstances whatsoever take for his wife any woman not of that religion or sect.' " Ivan clenched his teeth. Now, if he liked, he could free himself; now at last he had his definite, untempered alternative; his father was saying, after the long politic prevarications, without any qualification, "do this, or go." Now he could say to those people, who only wished he would:

"Look here! I'm going to clear out. I mean to marry a girl most decidedly not of the religion or sect in which I was born or reared. You can have the whole damned show to do as you like with," and he could take his thousand pounds, his shilling, and be free at last. Or—he could not. To regard his position from another standpoint: After all he was not so unlucky. He'd come in for a very nice little fortune, with ample facilities for increasing it considerably, and he felt sure his facilities amply matched his propensities. He had plenty, and all his own. People would envy him, few had so much; so much that was sure and certain and safe and flourishing. With care and attention he could become great—a well-founded business, and every opportunity for success nicely to hand. He could be famous. It was fun to make money, splendid occupation to bring out all the forces of your brain and mentality on the creation of more and more. There was something worth while and filling, satisfying in the re-

sponsibility of being head, of holding a great concern in the hollow of one's hand, and keeping it safe. A man's job.

And—and this must be considered—what, when one came down to facts, did lie upon the other side? Only his mother's yearnings, only the discomforts and rigors of having practically nothing, only the discouragements of starting with no special recommendation at the foot of the ladder, only these things, and a girl, who, incredibly, one still could not help loving, a girl with a sweet soft face and golden hair. And these were ideals, the most unstable, elusive inspirations of life, dreams that make an easy life hard. Love—the greatest agony on earth, a poor frugal existence, and the effect of *that* was writ plainly enough upon every clerk in the office, in the patient uncomplaining eyes of nearly every creature one saw in the streets. Consideration for love of the dead—well, that was a thin enough reason for giving up so much—and nothing besides. Ivan stared at the gleam and blue of the river in the distance; it was hard, wickedly, unnaturally hard, that when at last it might all have been so absolutely perfect, when his father, the one and only obstacle to all he wanted in life, was effectually removed, he, that old, obstinate man, should have been able to so hold him, even in death. "He kills me too," Ivan said to his soul. "He meant to have me, he was saving this up. He knew me perfectly. A thousand pounds! That's a taunt. He knew I could do little enough with that. He's killed me too, slain me with his devilish will and all the puzzle and worry and trouble he's put on me. Leave it all, outwit him, yes, and what then, how can I live, I, on nothing? The thousand would last just long enough for me to spend it, and then—what? Even supposing I could pick up a fairly decent job, what kind of life would it amount to? Nothing ever, that I really wanted. Nothing I'm used to. Nothing that makes life worth living. And then to see Anne poor, just be-

cause she married me. To live on year after year, and sustain myself on the meager self-satisfaction of having done what mother expects, and Anne hopes of me." Ivan, like the majority of those who have never known, much less experienced, poverty in any shape or form, imagined that there is one thing called poverty. That if one does not happen to have a certain amount of wealth, one is simply poor. He knew nothing of the grades of privation, or that there can be consolations and interests and contentments in the very state of being poor. To him, you either ate and dressed and lived as expensively as possible, or you didn't, and were to be pitied beyond all men. He did not dream of half-measures. Indeed there seemed to Ivan very little difference between the thin being huddled on a seat on the Embankment, and any one else who was not able to afford this or that. Not to be able to keep your car, never to get a decent drink or smoke a good cigarette, or meet people who looked and smelt and spoke well. Ivan, who had been through the War and might be expected to have known rather better, recoiled in horror and dismay from a most exaggerated generalization. Poverty. Something unknown, unfelt, outside all comfort, something ghastly! Poverty! Only the other day he had come across a bad case, a miserable wretch from the samples department, wanted a five-shilling rise, and he had heard afterwards that there was a whole family, and the wife soon to have another. Poverty! Impossible, and he need not. "I'm not really in a net," he reflected, "there'll be no more of that Sadie business even if I do keep on as I am. I shall be above all that now." Above? How above? Removed in some strange way from the family of whom two important and not easily overlooked members held important positions in his own Firm? And Mrs. Weinher, who now looked upon him as her own son, and would not leave a stone unturned until he was so legally? And Sadie, who didn't come to much, really, but would still be hanging

around? And all the people he had always known. They'd still be there, and the Firm, hanging upon him, great, solid, immovable—not a thing that once taken on could lightly be shaken off. Above all that? Only the higher by a little highly refined and carefully invested authority, power, that like all power would hold sway over himself, and, Ivan shut his eyes at the recollection, only the other night, only the night his father had died, he had given Sadie as much handle as she could possibly want to laugh at him, might very easily have given her enough to do entirely what she would, or at least to pester him with the most embarrassing recriminations. She knew him now, knew things about him, knew what he could be like. Above? How above? Never! in the name of common sense at least admit it, even lower than ever as head of the Firm. "Why," demanded Ivan, "why can't I do what I like?" Oh, to be able to have it all, to marry Anne, and she would wear so gracefully the benefits of wealth, do what he wanted, without reference to anything or any one. Suppose for one wild moment it could be done. If to all intents and purposes Anne might be anything, if it need not be known that she was a Christian.

After all, religion—and that was the gist of the whole matter—was a personal and private concern. No business of any one's and surely it could so easily be kept away from curious eyes. It did not matter. But that was just what Anne would never see. She thought it did. It mattered so much to her, that she could kiss him as she had that extraordinary afternoon, and still quite firmly and quietly let him go; it mattered, too, so much to his mother, that when she lay dying, nothing, absolutely nothing, mattered so much. Why should it be so, mattering like that? At the bottom of everything. Mattering so much to his father, that he had made his whole property, every aim of his life secure against it! No, not quite. Once, he too, like his son, had been inclined to think it could not be of so great

account, had thought that beauty might be more important, and found out his mistake in bitterness. Yes, it mattered perhaps, but only deriving its significance from the attention people paid it.

Really, if he married Anne, his marriage mattered no more from the point of view of the religion than if he married a Buddhist, and worshiped Buddha. Life and making money could still go on the same. But this plain common sense was what people did not seem to understand. Not the people he had to think of anyway. His father, owning property, had had a perfect horror of his possessions passing into Christian control, when, really, the individual convictions of the succeeding owners could not surely concern a soul. Anne had an insuperable dread of marrying any one who did not happen to have the same conception of life and after-life as she had, and he knew hosts of ordinary people, Jews and otherwise, who, for all they professed the broadest, most ambiguous views, for all they protested complete indifference to this, that or the other, laid down, nevertheless, endless obligations upon those who would manage their affairs when unfortunately those affairs would be their own no longer. No—one, really, didn't care about anything, and it seemed that a good many cared about religion in some form or other more than anything. There was no such thing as not caring. "I must go back," he said to himself. "I told them I'd be there this afternoon. Must start showing every one that I recognize my responsibility. But what a stupid mockery it all is! and how good it might be! How I could work if I could only live comfortably, live like most men! If I could marry whom I want to, and live my own life, what I couldn't do to the Firm if I only might have Anne to do it for! And there's that Sadie, she'll never forget that I made love to her." For, thinking carefully, Ivan had remembered rather more of that unfortunate incident on the sofa in the drawing-room, and he

gnashed his teeth in rage at the thought of such a downfall. Not that he should not make love, or that any chosen woman was not worth the hour's passing infatuation, but that it should have been Sadie! That he should have so outraged all his boasted good taste and cultured sensibilities, to have said whatever mad things he must have said for such a woman! She, whom he had laughed at and patronized; she, to have had him as only the best and most perfect specimens might. That he could have gone disappointed and miserable from Anne, got drunk (and that was raw enough), and sought consolation in Sadie Weinher's vacuous charms! He felt he could never properly respect himself again. What would his mother have thought of such a crudity!

On the very sofa where she had lain, evening after evening, and spoken to him, and said the nice cool reasonable things he had always so loved to listen to, as if he could not at least have chosen some place more fitting! "My dear Ivan, how very thoughtless of you," he could hear her gentle, undisturbed voice, with its grace and ease, and the least suspicion of a slur to show that even this subject was scarcely of vital interest to her, "rather unnecessary, don't you think? It is always such a pity to commit oneself. Life is sufficiently complicated already without one becoming any more involved in the tangle. You really ought to think." He really ought to! If only, thought Ivan, she were here now. She, with her clear brain, her calm close reasoning, her cultivated point of view. To talk to him, and tell him exactly what she thought. Not she as she had died—crying and imploring, haunted by some nameless, devastating dread, delirious, all her pride, her reserve broken down—but she, she as he had always known her, she as he would remember her, tall and quiet and full of the wisest ideas. To advise him, to restore, by the influence of her mere presence, his balance. What would she have said? Putting aside the change in her

whole attitude at the last? With an eye for beauty and a reverence for ideals, yet she had been, in a way, intensely practical. Had she not married his father for money? Would she not have reminded him that to be rich is to be more fortunate than most, and more comfortable? that it is folly to discard what is at hand for the sentiment of a promise, the wildness of a desire? "It is a good thing to have money, Ivan. You don't know what it is to be without it. To be without money drives you to any madness, to desperation. Look what it drove me to once." There was a lot in that. People went into the Thames for want of money. And yet, on the other hand, what other thing might she not have said? She had loved Anne. Was it not equally likely that she would have said, "For God's sake, Ivan, don't, for the sake of dull and endless security give up all that can ever make your life a beautiful, invigorating, inspiring thing. Don't imagine that to be rich is better than to have your love!" And there was a good deal in that. People had gone into the Thames only to escape from the muddle of too much money, the loneliness of being too rich.

And when she was dying she had said, "Promise me, Ivan. I can't die and leave you without hope." And now perhaps she strove and longed to reach him, to make him hear that she reminded him, "You promised me, Ivan!" What would she have said? Forgetting the passers-by, forgetting everything, Ivan leant back on the bench with closed eyes, like some one in pain. Oh, just to have her back for one tiny second, just to see her again, once, just even to know that he hadn't quite lost her, that somewhere she still lived and loved him. She who had always known what mattered most, she who had loved Anne. That she of all had to be the one to die! And he, to be left, bewildered, without hope. Suddenly, he opened his eyes. Money,—well, hadn't he got a thousand pounds? Was not that something? Couldn't he do anything with that?

He knew he possessed brains and energy, infinite resource and business instinct. What could not be done with a thousand pounds! How could one have nothing if one had so much? Mechanically, absorbed in a new and exciting trend of thought, Ivan got up, and started to walk back whence he had come. A thousand pounds! Why not find out what he could do, how far it would go? And as if in encouragement of a new hope came that voice in his head again: "Yes, you've got that, Ivan. It's quite a lot. Don't give up anything. Don't let him have the supreme satisfaction of seeing you give up. See what you can do, and, once you're free you can have Anne. She said she loved you. She still waits, you know, though she can't understand what keeps you. Don't let her wait too long. Go to work. Be your own master, for my sake, for your own!" Yes, Ivan pondered, going along with head bent and unseeing eyes. There was something in that. And then it occurred to him, what irony it would be to go back now to that business just as if he meant to stay there for good, work in it for a bit, and all the time use his blessed thousand pounds. Double it, treble it, there were ways of doing these things with any luck, then when he had done so, he would know, he would have proved that—well, that he knew something about making money. He would not be afraid, and then he would pay back what he owed to the Firm, what he had taken during the time of false pretenses, and leave it for ever. He, Anne, his mother, the Weinhers, every one would be pleased. It was a good idea, the best that had come to him, worth working out. Ivan began insensibly to revive.

He increased his pace, and arrived at the office, determined and alert. That afternoon he surprised Mr. Weinher by his forethought and energies. "He's making a good start," he thought. "I didn't think he'd got it in him. He means to be independent, I can see."

CHAPTER XIX

A HOT NIGHT

ONE warm September night—one of those nights when summer, staying late, seems to have overgrown itself, become, from its usual, pleasant, seasonable duration and moderation, an unwieldy, rather oppressive lingerer, lost to the art of graceful fading, a heavy veteran, full of impending storm—Sadie Weinher, who had been dining out in Golder's Green, came home to Hampstead by the tube. Changes had taken place in her family: Cousin Evelyn's death, poor Uncle Solomon's sudden end, Ivan's assumption of his rightful position in the Firm, to the accompaniment of wellnigh imperceptible underground swellings, as two other members of the Firm accepted the new owner, and became accustomed to his ideas (Monty said "became acclimatized"); particularly one idea, remarkable in its brilliancy, that Montague, considering his marked salesman's abilities and smoothness of tongue, should be assigned some responsible duties, entailing his traveling a good deal, some work which, while allowing his powers their due scope, would simultaneously provide the Firm with respite from his somewhat exacting presence. All changes impressive enough, and calculated to induce in a family of Weinhers a certain amount of head-shaking and platitudes upon the sadness and uncertainty of life, and of the so-often unlooked-for imminence of death. But to Sadie, a being unaccustomed to count alterations in general terms, and who perceived the importance of them only in relation to those they directly involved, the differences conveyed little. She agreed with

everything that was said, looked on with an aimless eye, and dozed guiltily through more than one evening devoted almost entirely, from the dinner bell onwards, to theories and speculations concerning Ivan Schenstein's attitude, outlook and abilities, and the gentle decline of that once great project, the union of the families.

The same thing was repeated over and over again. Ivan, meeting her, eyed her a little as if he were not certain in which direction to look; and every one remarked what a hot summer it was.

But with the exception of the latter, these things did not move Sadie. A difficult and incomprehensible world went its uneasy way and Sadie thought nothing of it. Smiling her best, she was far too occupied with a disconcerting feeling of futility, of depression, of nerves overstrung and emotions strained, and of trying to explain the phenomena. The atmosphere of her home did not encourage self-analysis, and Sadie, if indeed she had known the import of the term, would undoubtedly have shied from anything sounding so unhealthy, but she did feel dimly that she was as one lacking meaning. There was no deadlock; she merely meandered slowly and without set purpose, along a beaten track towards an uncertain goal. She felt thirsty, of no special account, disappointed, and stirred with some peculiar, disturbing sense of insatiation. And yet when she searched for a reason there was nothing there. She grew bewildered. As one, awakened from sleep, rises, takes candle, and goes forth down the dark passages, to seek the cause of mysterious sounds, finds nothing, and returns unsatisfied and still fearful, thus did Sadie listen hard to her feelings, and discover no marauder. So now, as she sat lumpishly in a corner of the carriage, empty save for a few scattered homecomers, she felt dreary to the point of obsession. It seemed so stuffy, the train did so rock and sway, a hundred too-bright advertisements glared at her, her nose felt warm and shiny, and the silver binding her

head was rough and irritating and too tight. Her head ached, and what with one thing and another, Sadie felt that if somewhere something did not somehow give, she would collapse.

Every one seemed to be doing something definite, but for her there was nothing—nothing. "That bounder Ivan," she reflected, staring at the dark shape of herself in the black glass opposite, "he knows when he's all right. He means to hang on to what he's got. I wonder what's happened to Anne?"

She had heard nothing from Anne for some time. "I wonder," Sadie thought fiercely, "what she'd say to Ivan about that night? She must have told him off to make him get drunk like that. Well, I don't want him." No, she didn't want him. Sadie was quite sure of that. Nothing, oh, nothing was further from her thoughts than such a thing. "Came to me when he didn't happen to have anything better on hand. And now he'd as soon not see me. I don't count."

And a fever rose up in Sadie as she remembered that she had not been so reluctant, just at first, not until she had realized all at once the precise attitude of that—that trifler towards herself. Just such an evening as this it had been, a—beastly evening. With the air all soft and sickly so that you didn't know where you were. Such evenings were not fair. They took advantage of your better sense, and the memory of them afterwards, sweet, warm, caressing, under a gloomy, darksome night sky like a dark plum, couldn't help you. Didn't excuse you for being a poor sort of fool. Night time had a lot to answer for. It was treacherous, responsible for half the trouble and bitter mistakes in the world. So beautiful. It wasn't right anything should be allowed to be so lovely, and hurt so much. Night didn't play the game. It wasn't civilized. But after all, she, Sadie, thank goodness, had been—well, almost proof against its seduction. "I told him what I

thought of him," she considered with strangely little satisfaction. "The beast! I wonder how many madder than me he's made a fool of!" The train slowed down. Her station, thank heaven! Sadie got up. She caught a glimpse of a fair girl in the next compartment, and a sensation almost akin to tears burnt her eyes. She looked so pretty! What did it feel like to be so pretty? To be as pretty as that, as pretty as Anne? It was so nice to see a slim attractive creature, when one was nothing oneself. Nothing, only stupid and fat. A silly thing for whom no one was ever likely to really care. What did great staring eyes and what people called a "magnificent" complexion count against this queer something which so many others than herself seemed unaccountably to possess? Delicate, fine, precious, like Anne's white blossom of a face, and hazy gold hair. Sadie turned out of the station, and down the hill. She let her cloak drop a little. It was so hot. "What does anything matter?" she asked herself, dully, and her bitterness seemed like a taste in her mouth. No one ever thought anything really mattered. She could tell that by the way they viewed things. If she'd been Ivan, it would have mattered to her that there was Anne. But he seemed not to think so. Oh, Life! To get older and older, and spend more and more time dressing up, and all for nothing in the end! Sadie, borne up on the crest of a huge sigh, raised her face to the sky. And the sky, heartless cynic, that has returned so many heartbroken glances, gazed back, calm and serene, unmoved. A few stars hung heavy in it; one, caught up in the branches of a tree, gleamed like a jewel in a dress. Sadie looked at it hungrily. People simply didn't know what it was to see stars and everything else beautiful, and feel at—at such a disadvantage. In Sadie's warm heart, moved with sickening throb some latent great desire. And yet she did not know, could not possibly formulate, what tumult surged within her. She could only tell herself, hopelessly, that she was too fat—and too

—heavy. "No one nowadays has my figure. I'm hopelessly out-of-date." She turned the corner, a man passed, and with the queer license of late hours, stared into her face. What he said she did not know, but with Ivan in mind, she swore to herself, at the folly and presumption of mankind. "I don't like him," she cried in her soul, "I don't, I hate him. He's false and pretentious. A beast! A blighter! A man! I can't bear him. He laughs at me. Oh, I simply loathe him!" Sadie's temper was rising. She banged the gate and dashed up the path between the moving, rustling bushes, up the steps to the front door, as one pursued, urged on by some unreasoning driving fury, some anger with she knew not what—something—anything. But she took the hall staircase slowly, after the manner of her mother, and from the drawing-room as she reached the door came a voice, "Is that you, Sadie?"

Sadie opened it and advanced. She subsided into a chair, staring unobjectively at her mother.

"Well, did you have a good time?" asked Mrs. Weinher pleasantly.

"Oh, it was all right," Sadie said. "I didn't stop. They seemed to want to keep it up till morning. I expect they're at it still. But I came away. Got a bit of a headache. It's the heat, I expect."

"I should go straight off to bed, then," Mrs. Weinher observed. "Fancy, it's not like you to get a headache. Well, of course, it is close out. Have a little whisky: it will make you sleep."

Mrs. Weinher never prescribed a cup of tea and an aspirin for the headaches of her family. Because this, though she scarcely realized it was the reason, had always been Mrs. Schenstein's remedy. Mrs. Weinher therefore, inevitably, was forced to consider aspirin faddy and foolish, dangerous, a bad habit, a drug, like Mrs. Schenstein.

"All right," Sadie agreed, but she made no movement, only sat with her cloak fallen round her, her feet out,

swinging her bag. She glanced at Monty, oblivious in clouds of smoke. The sight of him, standing there, did nothing to improve her condition. He, with his eyes—through the smoke she could see them—fixed in a rapturous gaze on the ceiling! He, with his funny grin! "I saw Maurice Hagen and his sister there," she said after a minute.

"Did he ask after me?" inquired Montague.

"Yes," said Sadie, wishing most perversely that she could say no.

Montague laughed. "He would! He hasn't forgotten the last time we met."

"I'm sure he hasn't," Sadie rejoined.

Monty looked at her. The instinct to say something to annoy came to him. "That was the time when Ivan Schenstein was there. It was funny! But I don't see Ivan about so much now. He's getting sober. Turning out just the good man we always knew he really was. Got the business well in hand. When it isn't a meeting it's a big deal, and he's as keen as possible. You wouldn't know him when he comes in sharp by half-past nine, and starts work."

"Ah," said Mrs. Weinher, "wouldn't his father have been pleased. It's just what he always wanted to see."

"Stops late at night, too," continued Monty, still looking at the ceiling.

Mrs. Weinher made a sound intended to convey gratified incredulity.

"Yes. I think he's entirely settled down and given up his old bad ways. But I hope the strain won't tell on him. I must say he looks as if he never gets any sleep. Be a pity if we were to lose him too."

"Oh, shut up!" Sadie's tones were decidedly overwrought. "It's bad enough to have a headache in this heat, without your silly voice all the time."

"Sorry," said Monty. "But I must say it's quite gratifying to witness such a transformation. Work! He's an

example to every one! And he makes a good head too," he added viciously. "Treats me very nicely, considering."

"Yes, considering what you are," said Sadie.

Monty was silent, then he turned his head and looked down towards her, still moodily swinging her bag. "He'll be getting married soon," he said. "Do you remember all the fuss there used to be about that? But I think it's blown over now, all right. Ivan's got very independent since he came into all his wealth."

At this advanced hour ordinarily, Monty would scarcely have considered it worth his while to try deliberately and rouse Sadie's ire. But he had been suffering a lot lately. Life under the Firm's new head was exquisitely trying. And Sadie looked so stupid, he could not resist baiting her. It was like sticking pins into an unwieldy blue-bottle. A certain relief.

Sadie returned his gaze. She hated him as much as he hated her. Always had these two so disliked each other. With a deep, unswerving loathing. It was a matter of temperament and the fact that neither of them had any idea that they should not do so. It was instinctive, and they were both essentially creatures of instinct.

"Yes, he'll take his choice now all right. I'm sorry for your little friend Anne—what was her name?—she wasn't a bad little thing. . . ."

But Sadie, with an exclamation which might have been anything, was very suddenly upon her feet. It was a small matter, and generally Monty did not greatly count, but to-night, feeling as she did, no spark was too feeble to ignite such highly inflammable stuff.

"Yes, and you'd better leave her alone! Don't you 'Anne' my friend! There's one thing: she wouldn't have had you! And I'll tell you this, she's given Ivan up. He wasn't good enough for her. Gave him up before his father died too. Yes, and here's another thing. . . ."

So everything she had thought about Monty for years,

all that had rankled since they first played in the nursery, came pouring from Sadie's incensed and uncontrolled lips. She said everything she felt. The stream of invective rushed and swirled from her like a molten river, and strange rarities, choice specimens of speech, came jerking and bobbing down with the flood. She stood, Fury itself, driven by a passion infinitely greater than any that Montague's feeble annoyances could provoke. Mrs. Weinher, roused, sat and stared, and wrung her hands, and cried on Sadie to stop, and stared again. But Sadie was past hearing. Montague, amazed, stood up against the mantelpiece, as a man backing against a cliff, in the last fruitless effort to avoid the advancing tide, and watched her, fascinated, afraid. And still Sadie kept on, her hands at her hips, chains and tassels swinging wildly, her face red and white in patches. She stopped at nothing, and her language returned rapidly to her grandfather, who had done a thriving trade in Petticoat Lane.

"And you're a damned good-for-nothing hound!" she shrieked at last. "Standing there like nothing on earth, airing your views and talking! Who do you think you are? My God—I wouldn't be you not for all the gold in Egypt. I'd be ashamed to own such a face. You—why, if you couldn't annoy some one you'd pine away. And a jolly good job too. How dare you mention my friends! How dare you presume to say Anne Hurst's name! You're sorry for her indeed! You're jealous, that's what you are. Jealous—jealous because she wouldn't look at you—jealous of Ivan, too, you are. You—you lanky clothes-prop! You—you moth-eaten scarecrow, you greasy milksop! Think yourself fine, I know! Always so smart! You take care—you'll find yourself looking silly one day! You—you moldy-herring-bone you! That's right, you may smile."

Sadie's voice throbbed and cracked suddenly with hysteria,

as Monty's teeth gleamed in a snarl. "Go on, smile away. I don't care. You smile too much. But don't imagine I mind your smiling. Even though it is at me. You don't think much of me, do you? Well, I'm glad. I wouldn't have you think much of me for anything, it'd be an insult. I'm sorry you're alive—I'm ashamed of you. I wish you were dead! If I thought it worth while, and the soiling my hands, I'd kill you, yes—I would, and chance the consequences!"

"Sadie dear!" remonstrated Mrs. Weinher feebly, "Monty!"

Monty smiled at her brilliantly. "It's all right, mother, she's a bit mad, I think."

"Mad, am I? Mad!" Sadie's voice rose higher than ever. "Not so mad as you're bad, then."

"Sadie!" Poor Mrs. Weinher looked at her daughter helplessly.

Sadie spun round and eyed her wildly.

"Sadie you—do think now. Come!" Repeated experience had given Mrs. Weinher—herself comparatively placid-tempered—a manner on these occasions rather as if she were grooming an impatient horse.

She looked towards her son, standing with head very slightly bent, and an expression of smiling, evil ingratiation, managing to convey, in every line of his bearing, just that attitude which he knew would be most annoying. And he was so cool. Never a harsh word or an unfair onslaught could upset Monty. He merely smiled.

A little more, and Sadie, irritated beyond endurance by the sight of that slit of a smile, completely forgot herself, and provided a nice situation with its climax. With one swoop towards the table, she poised a bowl of flowers over Monty's petrified head, then slowly decanted the contents over it. The bowl went last, missing his nose by less than an inch, and falling with a crash on the floor. Then some-

what relieved, she sank into a chair, and laughed and cried, rocking backwards and forwards with the last remnants of her overtaxed energy.

But Montague, after the first second's dazed impassivity, soon came into action. With a sound like the snap of a dog, he was upon Sadie; still cool and calm, he sprang at her with a deadly surety, as if nothing whatever could now deter him from slaughtering her upon the spot, for Monty's dignity, his one safeguard from an unsympathetic world, had been attacked, his face was streaming, and he had flowers in his hair. Sadie had managed to frighten him, and he would never forgive or forget that. What he meant to do, or would have done, did not transpire; Mrs. Weinher shrieked, and Sadie, looking up suddenly to find him upon her, let out a howl like a wounded bull, when outside came the sound of heavy feet, and a voice said: "Hullo, don't I hear some one crying?"

Mr. Weinher had come home from his club. For some reason his return seemed to make the murder of Sadie an impracticable proposition, for Monty, still grasping his sister's shoulder the while she shrieked on without cessation, looked up and waited.

"There now. There's your father. Sadie, you are a bad girl!"

"Why, what on earth!" Mr. Weinher stood in the doorway, staring. "What's wrong with Sadie?"

Monty, relinquishing the shoulder rather as he, with his beautiful hands, might have thrown away a dirty rag, moved to one side and stood silent. Mrs. Weinher looked at her husband, mutely. Sadie cried bitterly.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Weinher demanded loudly. "Sadie, stop that row. Stop it at once, do you hear. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You'll have all the neighbors up in a minute."

He looked towards Montague, inquiringly. "Have you been hurting her?"

Montague was wiping his face, smiling. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Hurting? Of course not. As if I would be likely to. I don't know what's the matter. I said something quite casual, and it seemed to send her raving mad. She's been going on like this for half an hour now. She's off her head."

Studying his son, Mr. Weinher became suddenly aware of his appearance.

"You, you're mad as well," he said. "What's that? You've been sticking flowers in your hair. And you're all wet. What have you been up to?" He turned to Mrs. Weinher sternly. "This is a nice thing. Come home expecting to find a little peace and quietness—you ought to be in bed, too—and it might be a lunatic asylum. What do you mean by it?" He went over to Sadie, and touched her shoulder.

"Now come along. This won't do, you know. It is too late for this sort of thing. Now, now, now. I can't have this. What's it all about?" Mr. Weinher was never anything but very kind to Sadie. Ever since the memorable occasion when he had heard that he possessed a daughter, he had felt that it was wiser and better to treat a daughter well. A daughter was a strange, difficult, unlooked-for piece of property. Like a bit of delicate china, like—something like a wife. He looked up. "You shouldn't tease her, Monty. You know she doesn't like it."

Monty gave his neck a last careful wipe and adjusted his tie. His face had completely regained its smooth suavity.

"I don't know what you call tease," he said. "I suppose I've got a right to speak in my own home. She nearly killed me just now," he added. "Threw a bowl of flowers at me. Broken it too. I tell you she's off her head."

Sadie raised her head at last. She was shaking, and her eyes looked like soaked, red flannel, but the storm had

abated, and she spoke up quietly enough, though in thick, uneven, strangled tones.

"It was something about him to-night," she said, "when I came in that was too much for me. I just couldn't stand to see him any longer. He was trying to make me mad—he knows he was—wasn't he, mother?"

Mrs. Weinher looked with wide eyes from one to the other of them, and would make no reply.

"He always does his best to make me wild. And he managed it to-night. He asked for it. I couldn't help myself." She sobbed a little.

"Pity you haven't got more self-control." Monty sneered. "A great girl of your size looks so silly, whooping and shrieking like a baby."

"And I'm not going to talk to you," Sadie turned on him with renewed rancor. "You've heard a few things to-night not many people would tell you, but they're true all the same. You won't forget them in a hurry."

Monty smiled at her.

Mr. Weinher spoke.

"Well, it's a pity you can't settle your differences without waking the whole street. But Sadie's been feeling the heat, no doubt, and Monty upset her. Well, I'm sure he's very sorry. There's no more to be said. That's right, isn't it, mother?"

An uncertain affirmative from Mrs. Weinher. She was looking at her bowl.

"Well, then," Mr. Weinher turned. "Now come, Sadie."

"It seems to me"—Montague delicately placed a cigarette between his lips—"it really seems to me that I'm owed an apology."

Sadie looked up.

"Oh, it does, does it?" she said in stifled, tear-laden tones. "Well, you can 'seems' as much as you like," she said, for the violence of her emotional upheaval had de-

prived her speech of any sanity. "You won't get an apology from me. I'm not quite so mad."

"No, but you are mad," he told her, his equilibrium now completely regained. "Absolutely mad; still, you ought to say you're sorry, you know."

"Oh, don't," Mrs. Weinher begged weakly. "Don't, Monty."

"There you are." Sadie swept the air to signify the position. "That's how it is. Always so sure, always so certain, always so damned right. Never thinks I matter. Never thinks I count. Never thinks I've got a right to get wild. He—he, oh, I don't know anything bad enough! Always smiling and keeping his temper, standing there like a stuffed ape and grinning. Why couldn't he have answered back? Why couldn't he have a decent row like any other human being? And when I lose my temper, he goes and says I'm mad. And has the nerve to ask for an apology! An apology! Well, I'd like to see myself! And it's always the same." Sadie, warming to her subject, sat up in the chair, turning a wide, wild, ravaged eye upon her silent relations. "Always the same. No one ever cares whether I'm happy or not. I'm miserable, sick to death, fed up, wretched, and that thing calls me mad. He talked about Anne. Dared to mention my friend, in his foul way. Sorry! I'm not sorry. I wish I'd done much more than I did. I wish I'd thrown the bowl at his head, not only the water. It was silly to waste a good opportunity. He wants killing."

"Sadie!" murmured Mrs. Weinher, upon whom sleep was descending like a soft cloak. She wanted to attend and take an interest, she felt she ought to, but it was so late, and she had heard this sort of thing so often before.

"Well, he does. But anyway I won't have him talking about my friend, so that's flat."

"It's a pity you don't label them more conspicuously 'not to be touched.' How is one to know?"

"Sorry!" said Sadie, looking at him with bitter, withering scorn. "Sorry! Oh!" with a gasp she sprang up and ran out of the room.

Mr. Weinher could not stop her. Mrs. Weinher, waked up once more, called, "Sadie, come back, he didn't mean it. Don't be silly." She was rather frightened. The door banged upstairs. Mrs. Weinher looked at her husband and son with some dismay.

"You've upset her, Monty," she observed, and she began to rise.

Monty laughed.

"So it seems," he said. "But I shouldn't worry. She's got a vile temper."

"She hasn't," Mrs. Weinher said. "She's hardly ever so upset. I'm going up." She moved towards the door. "You'd no right to be so aggravating, Monty."

"No, I'll remember another time," Monty said. "It's always as well to keep behind the bars in a lunatic asylum."

Mrs. Weinher left the room. Mr. Weinher, who had been standing as if he patiently awaited the conclusion of this trying incident, moved also.

"Well," he said, "I don't know I'm sure. I came along the road, and upon my word, I could hear the shouts from the corner. I thought some one was being murdered at least. But I don't know."

"I'm going to bed," said Montague. "This sort of thing is tiring."

Silence settled on a disturbed household as silence, given a chance, will. Sleep came, and Mr. Weinher breathed in his deep asthmatical way, still wearing an expression of slight bewilderment. Nothing even in sleep was so puzzling as a daughter.

Montague, exquisite even in bed, lay and smiled gently away to himself, as was his wont even in slumber.

Sadie, that passionate child of nature, upon whom civilization had so little effect, cooled her hot face on a tear-

stained pillow, and soon forgot her troubles in sleep. Only Mrs. Weinher lay, strangely alert after her drowsiness, uncomfortable, staring into the dark, thinking of Sadie, and what she had cried out. "I'm wretched!" Sadie wretched! Her Sadie! And—that Ivan successful and happy. Ivan—Evelyn Schenstein's child. There was something wrong somewhere. Some injustice. He was so tolerant of Sadie. He was like his mother. Of all her family only she, surely, realized just how like. But "I'm wretched!" Mrs. Weinher sighed, and so lay thinking, staring into the dark.

CHAPTER XX

THE SHILLING

THAT queer fancy, that parting shot of Mr. Schenstein's, that shilling, became almost a peculiarity, certainly a characteristic, with Ivan. Its possession brought out, as not all the security and the success of the Firm had the power to do, his own real, deep, inherited propensities. To have a thousand pounds, just so much and no more, to call one's very own! A little separate, personal sum, a bit of private property, small, yet of infinite possibilities, was a new, sweet, pungent joy to Ivan. He had never, it seemed, had anything so completely and perfectly his own as was this. There was something innately fascinating about the secret of having it, something brilliant about the venture of it being so infinitesimal.

And, like a magnet, it attracted, with Ivan's mercurial abilities, more of its kind. How to make use of it, how to lay it out to the very best advantage, how to bring forth and extract its every conceivable possibility, was his one absorbing occupation as the days went by.

It was his talent, and he determined, fired at last, holding gold, that it should not be wasted. His own essential temperament came alive and flourished, as the idea of that thousand pounds grew and developed within him. All his marvelous cunning, all his amazing appreciation of values, all his instinctive finesse, all his indefatigable energy in a business deal, all his tenacity was stirred.

Doubt, hesitation, lassitude, all vanished, and Ivan, master financier from all generations, came proudly into his own. Speculation . . . as a moth flies to the candle, so

Ivan made, irresistibly drawn, for that form of finance, attracted by its uncertainty, by its chance-driven issues. Only the wicked candle flame is deceptively steady, and the unthinking moth is burnt. Not so Ivan. His adventurous wings he kept well out of harm's way. Day by day it mounted. Ivan meant this as a test. If he could but increase a given sum ten-fold, he would have proof enough for any success of his capabilities.

Month by month it grew. Ten thousand, and then—Ivan had it all settled—house property. Never were conditions more suitable, he had his chance now, and would create a fortune. The flickering flame burnt brightly, but no madness of infatuation drew clever Ivan too near its peril. . . . He had that self-control, more rare than virtue, that wondrous astuteness, the knowledge that at hazard caution is an essential. Only at "Happy Families" for paltry counters dare one take risks. The money, of course, did pretty well exactly as Ivan would have it. To one race only in all this world is gold a slave in hand, a master in mind. No mean compensation granted that race, among all its pains. While taller nations slave abjectly for their tyrant, too! Ivan became a king. His money was mounting up.

He was very happy in his kingdom, was Ivan. Anne, that most amazing, strong-minded enigma, might have been dead for all she wrote to him, or he to her. But Ivan, dwelling so definitely upon the day when he would have her, seldom remembered her now, while he worked for that triumphal day. She was all right. Silence for the time being was not unwise nor unfitting. Silence, until he could go to her, holding out, figuratively speaking, say ten thousand pounds. Then, when he would tell her, "You see, I can work when I like," there would be time for speaking. It was curious that Ivan never even thought of the possibility of his not loving Anne. He regarded her, though they had parted to all intents and purposes for ever,

as his own exclusive property. Anne was his Anne, assigned to him by his earliest attraction to her, by her avowed love for him, in which, of course, he could not altogether believe, and because others might, and he knew did, very often want her. She was to many, a prize, and Ivan was the temperament to appropriate prizes. And now he was having to win his prize. It appeared she went by order of merit. Very well. A competition or a test had never been too formidable for Ivan, if once he wished to win.

And meanwhile, silence. It pleasing our superbly simple young egoist to think of Anne desired by many, it never dawning upon him that patience left to starve can waste away, and she might, if only in desperation, marry some one nearer at hand. She had to wait, but it pleased him somewhat to think that she had made him wait. To Ivan, with a little of the East in his estimate of women, this was most stirring. And her obstinacy lent zest to desire.

Perhaps the most irritating foregone conclusion in all life is the manner in which an unconsciously selfish person's certainties are so often realized. He who places the most preposterously daring reliance upon an unlikely conclusion and coolly claims it in due course. He must suffer. But, perhaps because the unthinking egoism of the majority of human beings is so pure as to be scarcely evil, he goes free. Still, let it be said for Ivan that he did work, not entirely for the pleasure it would be to him to be able to confront Anne with proof of his capabilities; he worked, too, for genuine love of her, for sake of that charm in her, which, like a teasing tune in the head, he could never banish from his memory. A worrying tune, a tune perhaps one fain would forget, but a tune one perforce must remember. And so, with the healthy occupation of toiling for an object, with the irresistible attraction he found in making money, Ivan in a kingdom of his own was very happy; at the same time having the satisfaction of feeling that he was most unfortunate, that he had been denied happiness.

It rather annoyed Ivan, as it seems to annoy so many people, to find himself contented. But he drew consolation from the impression that he had been badly treated by a father who had thought fit to cut him off with a shilling and that his beloved was so exacting. Possibly, ever since the expulsion from Eden, it has been man's habit to distrust too much bliss. He knows too well he doesn't deserve it. Only the saints can accept contentment without a scruple: they becoming a little above mankind.

He made his ten thousand. Of course. It took him some time, but . . . old Mr. Schenstein had made ten thousand more than once in his life, and Ivan inherited his aptitude. He sat for a long time smiling away quietly to himself, staring at his desk, when he had accomplished his aim. What a fool he had been to imagine he could not work! How little had he known himself to fancy he was incapable of making money! With the impetus of a definite object in view he had found it quite easy—as any self-respecting person of determination, energies and opportunity can and will. What, thought Ivan, in the first flush of victory, could he not do? Ever won over by the fascination of the moment, Ivan decided, nothing. Obviously he had that in him to achieve any end. He had made himself free, could have Anne, throw off the shackles of the Firm, lead his own life. What could he not do? What indeed! From his window he looked down on the city street far below, a fine street, a civilized, ugly production of circumstance. And the people along it looked more like lumbering insects than creators of streets, and the traffic, trickling stupidly along, and the shop windows were nothing but little toy peep-shows. Insignificant. Unimportant.

So with his own existence. All that had seemed so large and essential had dwindled, imperceptibly but steadily, till now it mattered nothing at all. The things that had seemed at one time so gigantic and menacing. Where were

they? Marriage with Sadie, the Firm, his father's Will,—nothing. Mere flies upon a page, crushed in a moment, for he held the book. And those other things which had seemed so hopelessly frail and unattainable. How they had come to the fore! It was funny. An unexpected reversal of things. He had said once, on that day when his mother had asked him what he intended to do, "I shall find some way, in my own way." And, vague assurance as it had been at that time, sure enough, so it had come about. In his own way! Never could his father, flinging him a half-penny, have dreamt to what account it would be turned! Never have foreseen how the tables would be reversed. That very money intended for his humiliation, converted into his salvation! His father had lost his power at last, and the end for which his mother, with all her hampered, feebling strength had worked, would come into being, and through—oh, perverse fate! the last exhibition of dominion that had been his father's to give.

That shilling! A curious piece of fanciful foresight, inserted in so concise and legal a document as the Will. A subtle parting shot! A thousand pounds. "Just as much as you can waste quickly, and considering all things, you can't say I've treated you badly." And behold, smarting with the sting of the taunt, he had made it ten. A grand feat! And now the Weinhers, the patient, discreet Weinhers, would be very happy. There would be something delicious, poignant, poetic in the telling of his relatives that he had, after all, changed his mind. They would be so surprised, so pleased, and yet withal, so sorry. Glad, and yet suspicious of such a wholesale renunciation. There would ensue remonstrations. Mr. Weinher was a thoroughly conscientious man in his way, and Montague . . . supercilious of such exaggerated extravagance, such display . . . counting his benefits, and viewing the matter sideways after his wont, would doubtless be inclined to wonder if there could be anything to envy or covet in his

cousin's strange stand for a foible. Montague, very clever indeed, would perceive in a crooked way, that Ivan gained a good deal, balanced the exchange very well, even if his gains did not happen to appeal to him, Montague. Montague would grin, and gnaw his fingers in nervy conjecturing, but even Montague would be pleased.

And even his father. Ivan, trying to imagine a celestial Mr. Schenstein, thought he might, viewing affairs which were his no longer—if indeed a Mr. Schenstein without affairs was conceivable even in Heaven—viewing them then in the light of some possibly broadened and improved understanding, might realize the hopelessness of his son ever doing them justice, and become resigned to their passing into that last resource, the capable control of his relations. Even Mr. Schenstein might be pleased.

And then Anne, waiting and hoping, perhaps well-nigh despairing, would be very pleased. She had always known he could do something worth doing. She had always known there was some way out.

And his mother. Her pleasure, Ivan thought, would constitute her heaven. Ivan's face broke into a broad smile. It was indeed an excellent thing to be alive.

Something, possibly the fact that Anne was a Catholic, or conceivably the fact that his mother had been one, drew Ivan, with a certain reluctant curiosity, to the Cathedral. He stood at the bottom of the nave and looked about. The only impression he got at first was of vastness, a place so high that you got lost looking up, with a great colored cross hanging in the air somewhere among the shadows, and lights and half-lights, mote, beam and shadow-bar, a wide span, live with airy mergings, subdued mystery of the far-up roof. Then, still standing on the first venturing step into the place, Ivan became aware of some activity in progress. Down there, beyond the few scattered kneeling people, some strange silent affair seemed to be going on. Ivan, sensing a marvel, advanced further.

Something, he saw at once, was being carried out. What, he could neither see nor imagine. He stood, halted and staring. Stray references of Anne's returned to him, and his mother's mournful exile yearnings. This was what they meant. This was what they called Mass. Simple enough, for all he had imagined some elaborate, meaningless ceremony, empty as a beribboned, tinseled, unfilled Easter egg. Only the priest, a tiny far-away figure, moved in some stiff garment like a little doll, and a bell tinkled, and a Cup was raised and drained and set down again, and anon there came to his alert ears the broken murmur of some form of prayer. But there didn't seem to be much else. What was it? It ended without his finding out. And Ivan left, turning it over and over in his mind. These strange things were happening in many places and every day. A sort of grudging sympathy stirred in Ivan's heart. So that was Mass. Ivan was drawn again and again. Some suggestion in the murmur of a strange tongue, the movements of a man in the garb of stage, of king, of posturing marionette, the sudden treble ting of the bell, and, withal, the air of reverence as if all this were very solemn indeed, held him. Acting, perhaps, but Ivan loved the stage. And then his heart leapt to the decking of the altar, the gleam of satin, the glint of gold, the flowers, all the luxury of adornment. This was magnificence as it should be. Not harsh or irritating, not flaunting or loud, but rich and precious among the shadows, whereto few came, of which few knew. And, while defying disregard, it quaked no mountain of confounding doubts, to roll in clouds about one's head. Ivan, taking a seat in the aisle, could watch, undisturbed by any devastating avalanche of reasoning; rather thought, considering, questioning were lulled. It was a species of enchantment. But, emerged from the spell, reasoning was not drugged. Ivan took an active brain out with him, and the material, too, for activity. Was this, he wondered, the substance of his mother's

pain? Had she died so quietly, reconciled to this? Hidden away in this Church, so that you'd never guess? Something, Some One, real, like a king on a throne, a good king, beneficent and gracious, a humble, gentle king, self-effacing, Who deigned not to force His subjects, Who would induce no one by the mere force of His all-powerful dominion into His presence to make unwilling obeisance, but rather, relying wistfully upon the love and gratitude and grace of a thoughtless, boorish people, uncouth in their crass ignorance, coarse in their wilful ignoring, waited alone and silent, and waited on in vain. It was pathetic, like the crushed rose on the pavement with warm red petals bleeding from some harsh heel. Pathetic like all truth that no one ever seems to be able to see. Save a solitary few.

New experiences, food for reflection . . . reality, keen sword of the true blade thrust straight home. Ivan was very interested.

CHAPTER XXI

TO THE COMPLETE SATISFACTION OF EVERY ONE

ONE wet and windy evening in March the Weinhers were upstairs in their drawing-room after dinner. Mrs. Weinher sat over the gas fire with her work, an ambiguous occupation, made of white linen and some sort of half-finished embroidery, which looked very well and served its purpose admirably, in providing that comforting accompaniment to a rest by the fire, the delusion that one is busy.

Mr. Weinher had the late edition, from behind which he occasionally emitted an indignant snort, Sadie was at the piano with a friend, and Montague, not long since returned, smoked away to himself, in a corner. A happy, contented, care-free enough scene for any after-dinner materialist.

Mrs. Weinher took a stitch.

"So, Ivan wasn't there to-day?" she remarked casually.

Mr. Weinher glanced up perfunctorily.

"No."

Mrs. Weinher, thoughtfully, did a little more.

"I hope there's nothing wrong," she said. "He did not say he would be away, did he?"

"No."

"Well, see if he comes to-morrow; if not, I think I shall inquire."

Mr. Weinher was engrossed in his paper. There was silence. Then Montague sounded out of the shadows.

"A year ago one wouldn't have been surprised, but now . . ."

"He's never away," finished Mrs. Weinher. "No, that's

just it. It must be something's kept him, serious. No," Mrs. Weinher drew her thread slowly. "No, I must say I think we needn't have worried. He's surprised me. He really does seem to have waked up at last. I'm very glad to see it."

"Yes," Montague nodded. "He's waked up all right. There's no doubt about that. I can't think where he gets it all from. He keeps an eye on everything. We've had an excellent year for trade, too."

"He always did have it in him," observed Mrs. Weinher. "I always knew he could work all right. He's like his father. It only wanted the necessity to make him."

"Ah!" Montague stared through his smoke. "You should hear our Mr. Schenstein on the modern system of business, the personal note, the rearrangement of finance, and so on. That's how he talks to me. 'We must have properly regulated supervision. What we require is more really good advertising; I'm planning a complete revision of our agent system.'" Montague, with the faintest of smiles, sat very still, apeing bitterly. "You wouldn't know him to hear him talk about the Firm. All good, solid stuff, full of practical common sense. But how he's learnt all that up in less than a year beats me."

"He's taking it very seriously." Mrs. Weinher nodded over her needle.

"Yes, I must say I've been very agreeably surprised." Mr. Weinher must have been listening after all. "Conversing with him in a business capacity, I have been astonished and delighted. He's his father's own son, after all, and the House looks as if it's going to flourish."

"Yes," Mrs. Weinher nodded again.

Mr. Weinher turned back to his paper. For a time there was silence, broken only by an occasional bar from the piano, and the broken conversing of Sadie and her friend. But the peace had been broken. Mr. Weinher's paper did not remain up for long.

"He's made some changes too, hasn't he?" said Mrs. Weinher.

"Quite a number," Mr. Weinher threw the sheets aside. "Quite a number. Hauptmann still manages, of course, but Wells has the Export. That was against my advice."

"And in April I go traveling," observed Montague gloomily. "It appears I'm so persuasive and so eloquent, and so convincing and so remarkable in every way, that I simply can no longer be spared from the foreign agents' side of affairs. Apparently it's going to be a nice change for me after so many years over the road."

"Well, of course." Mrs. Weinher was doubtful. "You always did say you wouldn't mind going abroad, Monty."

Montague made no response. Only stared deeply.

"I expect he wants to get rid of you," came a timely suggestion from the direction of the piano.

"Doubtless," Montague nodded.

"No." Mr. Weinher had not resumed his reading. "It's nothing like that. Only, of course, if Monty sells well—and he certainly does—it's only sensible that he should go."

"Of course." Mrs. Weinher still sewed.

"I had my eye on the home sales," said Montague. "It sounds all right all this going abroad, but I'm quite happy in the Firm. You don't know much when you're in Spain, or Egypt, and if he thinks I'm going out to Australia to hawk the round of those ports for six months out of the year, he's very much mistaken. The Firm's representative in Port Adelaide, or perhaps it'll be Buenos Aires. No, thank you!"

"It is a long way," agreed Mrs. Weinher.

"Perhaps you'll be sent to the South Pole," Sadie said brightly. "I should like that."

To the strains of derisive rag-time, Montague preserved a dignified silence.

"No." Mr. Weinher was leaning back, gazing into the

fire. "You'll do it for a year or two, and then you'll have some ground for making your demands."

Montague lit a fresh cigarette and said nothing.

"After all, you're not tied. You've got your shares and your own interest in the Firm, you can always . . ."

"Hark!" Mrs. Weinher held up her needle suddenly. "Who's that? Be quiet, Sadie."

Sadie stopped playing and every one listened. "I thought I heard the bell," said Mrs. Weinher. "There's some one coming up."

Steps sounded outside the door, the handle turned, and Ivan came in. He stood in the doorway, blinking in the light.

"Well, Ivan!" Mrs. Weinher exclaimed. "And we were only wondering what had happened to you! Come in."

Ivan advanced to the center of the room.

"I just came in for a few seconds," he said.

"Few seconds, nonsense!" said Mrs. Weinher. "Take off your coat and sit down. We're all here this evening. You know Alice Saltzburg?"

"We thought you were—well, you know, ill," said Montague, looking at Ivan very pleasantly.

"Ill!" Ivan still stood, holding his hat and stick. "No. I wasn't able to come in to-day."

"There was a bit of trouble," Mr. Weinher said. "You promised to see Renfrew to-day, don't you remember? I saw him instead. So it was all right. I said you were ill."

Ivan nodded, looking down at him as if he had not heard.

"That's all right, then . . ."

"Sit down, Ivan." Mrs. Weinher regarded him with some surprise. "You're not in such a hurry as all that."

"I am in rather a hurry."

She stared at him, very tall with raised head in the brilliant light.

"There's nothing the matter?" she asked.

There was silence. A few awed notes came from the piano, as Sadie gently touched the keys. Every one waited.

"Funny case, this Brent murder," remarked Mrs. Weinher after a time. "Very mysterious."

"Yes."

"Very wet to-day," came blandly from Montague.

Ivan spoke suddenly.

"I've just come to let you know that I've decided to relinquish, under the terms of my father's will, my ownership of the Firm, and my inheritance," he said clearly.

For a moment, so unexpected was the announcement, no one seemed to take any notice. Sadie still played softly. Mrs. Weinher's needle was still poised ready over her work. Mr. Weinher sat and stared into the fire. Then Montague, never unprepared for any contingency, began to narrow his eyes, and they all looked up, struck dumb.

"Yes," Ivan repeated. "I want to say that I can no longer continue as Head of the Firm. I have considered everything, and am now absolutely certain." He stopped.

"Why, Ivan," Mrs. Weinher was the first to speak. "What's happened? You didn't think this a few days ago."

He nodded. "I've been thinking for a long time."

Mrs. Weinher stared at him.

"But . . ."

"So you will understand what my position is. I step out of the inheritance altogether."

There was a long silence.

"A little sudden, isn't it?" came Montague's voice at last.

Ivan turned to him.

"Sudden? I suppose it must seem so to you. To me, it's merely the outcome of quite a long period of considering. But it may sound rather strange to you."

Montague smiled.

Mr. Weinher spoke then, moistening dry lips.

"Do I understand that you have decided to give up your rights as heir, my boy?"

"Yes."

Mr. Weinher looked at him and at the fire, and at him again.

"And are you quite certain you have thought out exactly what it means, what is entailed?"

"Quite certain."

Mr. Weinher shook his head.

"It's a tremendous step."

"I know it is."

There was another intense silence. The Weinhers quiet and still, assimilating the news. Very sensible, very matter-of-fact and impassive, exceedingly well balanced they looked. Just a shade incongruous, with the unconscious slipping of dignity, that must come to all civilized beings, struck suddenly by unorthodoxy. Mrs. Weinher like some embarrassed Sphinx; Mr. Weinher as if he were going stale; Sadie, regarding the chief actor in a most dramatic scene, with open mouth; the friend interested, though a little self-conscious. Only Montague, incapable of surprise, sat, his expression immovable, a mask, and yet beneath the mask, that subtle vitality, his intelligence, working with terrific speed, whirling, a great soundless machine, or like quicksilver, running, running in all directions, and his eyes darted like silver fish under their drooping lids. It was a long moment, then, "Of course, I could not presume"—Mr. Weinher spoke, in tones that trembled slightly —"I could not presume to interfere with your decisions, but as an older and more experienced man, I feel I am bound to offer what advice is mine to give. You . . . your poor father"—he stopped to shake his head—"your poor father hadn't anything of this sort in mind. He never dreamt of this. You were his heir." He broke off

again, and leant forward suddenly, eyeing his clasped hands.

"You forget," Ivan reminded him gently. "He did. He even made special provision against the contingency. He foresaw possibilities, and in their event he would not have me."

Mr. Weinher looked up. "Possibilities!" he repeated vaguely. "Possibilities!"

"Yes," said Ivan in a hushed voice.

Mr. Weinher looked at him. "You inherit under your father's will," he said slowly.

Ivan shook his head.

"Only if I obey its conditions," he said.

Mr. Weinher glanced down again. He nodded.

"You think of not doing so?" he inquired.

"Yes."

Mr. Weinher studied his fingers in deep abstraction. Then he raised his eyes.

"Well," he said, "I don't know. You can only go your own way. It's not for me . . ." his voice trailed slowly off. "It's not for me to say what I think. . . ."

Again he lowered his eyes. There was silence. Then Mrs. Weinher moved suddenly and spoke:

"Sit down, do, Ivan," she said. "Now has Ivan really thought it over properly? Of course, as you say, it's his own affair entirely, but I don't think, I don't think he can have thought it over. It's a big step to take so suddenly. There's no question about that. I'm sure it's very nice and right of him to come along and let us know what he's been thinking, but at the same time he mustn't think it's in any way final. That's right, isn't it? You must take plenty of time to consider carefully, and decide, Ivan. You can't come rushing in like this, and tell us you've decided to give up everything you've got for good and all."

Ivan smiled at her.

"I have decided."

She looked at him.

"I have decided," he said again. "Though it's very good of you to take such a broad view of the matter."

Mrs. Weinher gave herself a little shake.

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, "it's hardly likely we should take it as final. Rush you into a thing like that. Why should we?" and Mrs. Weinher sat back with dignity.

Ivan nodded, still standing.

Montague was watching him carefully. Sadie stared, as an infant will stare, fascinated, at a dangling colored ball. Then Mr. Weinher spoke and his voice was husky with emotion.

"This is a very serious step on your part. We must have some more talk on the subject. I must say I'm utterly astonished. I cannot believe that you have really taken everything entailed into full consideration."

"It was the everything entailed that decided me," Ivan said in a deep voice.

They all stared. He moved.

"No. My mind's absolutely made up. I came to tell you to-night that I relinquish the ownership of the Firm and everything else I came into. It is yours."

Mr. Weinher, after an immense bewildered silence, threw his hands up in a little gesture of despair.

"Well," he said, "I don't know."

Montague, in accents of extreme suavity, made a suggestion:

"It might assist our not unnatural wonderment to some extent if we were permitted some insight, however slight, into your motives for this decision. What actuated it? What persuaded? I take it you have—er—fallen in love. Only so much, of course, as will not encroach unwarrantably upon your private affairs."

Mrs. Weinher nodded. "Oh, yes, of course," she agreed.

Weinhers in glutinous oils, Weinhers in silver frames,

stared at Ivan with all their prominent eyes, in all their battalions. Live Weinhers waited, curious, for what he would say. So, looking calmly into space, with cool indifference, he answered:

"Why, yes. You see, this morning I married Anne Hurst."

A sound came from Sadie, as if she had bitten her tongue. Petrified like ice, no one else stirred. A deathly silence reigned. Then, very thin and stringy, from his corner, Montague's voice.

"Why, of course, Anne. We might have known. So you are married, are you? Congratulations."

"Thanks, very much."

"But I thought it was off, Ivan," cried Sadie, in mildly protesting tones.

Ivan looked at her. He laughed.

"Did you? Well, it's on again now, all right, anyway. We were married this morning."

Sadie stared at him wonderingly.

Montague laughed.

"You must certainly have been mistaken, Sadie."

"Look here," Mr. Weinher burst in. "What is all this about? Do you mean to say you've gone and got married, or what?"

Ivan nodded. His eyes were leaping with fun.

"This very morning."

"No wonder you didn't come to the office," observed Montague.

Ivan turned to him, smiling.

"No, I couldn't very well, could I?"

"But—but look here." Mr. Weinher was somewhat overwrought. "This is serious, this isn't a joke!"

"No, of course not," Ivan said. "I'm absolutely serious."

Mr. Weinher turned round to the fire and stared, then he turned back again.

"But—but how are you going to live?" he asked wildly.

"Oh, I shall get on all right," Ivan said cheerfully.

"Yes, but . . . Look here, Ivan." Mr. Weinher was resolute. "You say that under the terms of your father's will you intend giving up all that you came into. Very well, but what about money? You tell me you've married. What, I say, about money?"

"I think I shall be all right."

Mr. Weinher stared in dreadful bewilderment.

"You . . . but you can't," he began. "What do you mean?"

"I have something in view," said Ivan with great enjoyment. "Something, don't you know, in view."

Mr. Weinher was nonplused. He shook his head.

"Well, I hope it's all right."

"Don't you know I was left a thousand pounds?"

Mr. Weinher looked up at once.

"A thousand pounds. What are you talking about? You can't live on a thousand pounds. What's the good of a thousand pounds?"

"I should have thought you would have known that," Ivan reproved him. "It's been a lot of good to me. You can do quite a lot on a thousand pounds. Didn't you know that?"

Mr. Weinher was not to be convinced.

"I shouldn't care to start on my own on a thousand pounds."

"Oh, it might be worse." Ivan moved to turn. "I shall manage fairly well, I expect."

Mrs. Weinher looked at him.

"You're changed, Ivan."

He nodded. "I think I must be."

There was silence. Montague got up, and went over to the fireplace. He stood on the rug, rubbing and hunching his shoulders against the shelf, and jingled his keys, looking with lowered head at Ivan.

"And so you're married," he observed at last. "Well, Anne's a very lucky girl, isn't she, Sadie? Mind you write and congratulate her." A smile began on his face. "And now you'll have to settle down and lead a staid, highly respectable existence. Still, you've had a year's practise, I believe, so perhaps it won't come quite so difficult. And then you'll have Anne to teach you. She's very respectable. Oh, very."

Ivan returned his smiling gaze.

"Yes," he said shortly.

Montague glanced at his mother.

"It will be difficult to imagine him actually married, won't it?"

But Mrs. Weinher, albeit she kept very still and quiet, had her eyes turned almost subconsciously upon her daughter, and she made no reply.

"Ah, well," Montague finished up. "Doubtless we shall grow accustomed to it in time."

Mr. Weinher was looking into the fire.

"I don't understand it at all," he said.

"It is a bit of a mouthful," Montague agreed.

Ivan moved again.

"Well, that's all I came in for," he said. "I must be off now."

Mrs. Weinher roused then. And, strong common sense and solid good feeling bearing her up, a gallant old ship in strange waters, said her say:

"Well, I'm sure, it's the last thing we should have expected. I must say such a thing would never have occurred to me. But if Ivan feels he's done the right thing, I don't see there's any more to be said. After all, happiness is what counts in life, and there's little enough of it to be had, to be sure. Hardly enough to go round sometimes. I don't blame any one for taking what they can get. We all wish Ivan everything in life that's good, don't we, father? We're sorry, very sorry to lose him out

of the Firm, that goes without saying, but we all wish him every success possible, and I needn't say how welcome he'll be any time he feels like coming in, as he always has, more like my own son than anything else. That's right, isn't it, father?"

A deep Yes reverberated in Mr. Weinher's overpowered vitals.

"But I do hope," Mrs. Weinher added, as an afterthought, "you won't do anything rash, Ivan."

"I won't," Ivan promised.

"And as for Anne," Mrs. Weinher took up her discarded work and eyed it thoughtfully, "tell her I wish her the same as I do you. She's a very nice girl. I've always said that."

"Thank you very much indeed." Ivan looked down at her smiling. "I'll tell her that. Now I must go. I've told you all I wanted to say. You quite understand the position now, don't you?"

"I accept your plans, my boy," answered Mr. Weinher.

"That's all right then. There will be no difficulty at all. And I've no doubt the Firm will get on very well without me. It will be in very capable hands." There was a smile in his eyes, and a turn to his mouth that sent something red flying suddenly to Mrs. Weinher's cheeks.

"Yes," she said. "Perhaps it may be all for the best."

"Good-by," Ivan advanced a pace, and extended his hand to Mr. Weinher.

"Good-by." Mr. Weinher looked up as if he scarcely knew what to think.

"Oh, good-by, my boy. But of course you'll be in again?"

"Thank you." Ivan turned to Mrs. Weinher. Amidst a breathless hush she rose to the occasion. They embraced. "Good-by then, for the present, my dear boy," she said. "But of course you will be in again?"

To Sadie Ivan next turned. She eyed him coming

towards her with a sort of startled apprehension, then, transfixed and speechless, submitted an irresponsive cheek. Ivan kissed it gravely. He shook hands with the friend. Then went back to take, last of all, Montague.

Montague, who effaced a smile of cynical amusement, and with ostentatious haste assumed a composed expression, accepted the proffered hand.

"Ah, good-by," he said. "Give my . . . kind regards to Anne."

"Good-by," said Ivan. He stepped back, lingering a moment longer.

"Thank you very much for your advice and the nice way you have taken it all." He looked round on them all. Mr. Weinher, bending forward, staring dejectedly at the floor. Too confounded as yet to view the matter from his usual sensible standpoint. Sadie, staring and staring, open-mouthed, wide-eyed. Montague, regarding his last movements with interest, and Mrs. Weinher, arms folded, an expression of virtuous affront on her powdered face; understanding the victory, battling nobly, not with Ivan, rather with Mrs. Schenstein. Resentment for the triumph of that old feud, and attachment to him side by side, and disturbing her sorely. "What will she say," wondered Ivan, "so that I shan't have the laugh beyond the door? Good-by," he said again.

Mrs. Weinher rose then.

"Good-by, Ivan," she cried. "Don't forget, any time we shall be glad to see you. You mustn't forget us, you know. You mustn't forget us in your new life."

"No." Ivan only began to speak, and then stopped. For one second something, the nature of which he could hardly recognize, touched him, and his eyes dimmed. They wanted him, these relatives of his, but they would not speak. They knew he didn't want them. And suddenly, in that space of dreadful irresoluteness, standing amidst his own people, the whole room seemed full of pride. Every-

thing, the gold and silver, mirrors and brocade and the people, with Mrs. Weinher erect, head up-thrown, seemed significant. Seeing them all then he caught the meaning of age-long arrogance, none the less self-assured and invincible for all its hunted secrecy. "We are the kings of ancient times, but you have chosen. You must go your way." He stood, on the turn of his heel, struck by the flash of realization. Then, almost confused, he muttered a last farewell, turned quickly and strode out of the room. He raced downstairs, like a child released from school, and took the night air as a man drinks water after thirst in a great heat. In great, deep draughts. It was over! A pretty poor show! But as he walked quickly to the corner, rapid footsteps came pounding after him, and an agitated voice called, "Ivan, Ivan!" He turned. And there, in painful pursuit, breathless, bareheaded, with a coat flung round her shoulders, came Sadie. He stopped, and she limped up to him.

"Take me with you, Ivan! Do let me come! I want to see Anne! Take me to see Anne!"

Ivan laughed. "You're a darling!" he exclaimed. "Yes, of course I will. She'll be delighted. We shall have to hurry though. We're catching a train at ten. Come on."

With a sigh of relief Sadie struggled into her sleeves.

"I had to come," she explained. "I simply had to. It came to me quite suddenly. Oh, I'm so glad I caught you up."

Ivan took her arm and together they ran down the road in the dark.

CHAPTER XXII

SADIE

". . . OF course I am very happy. I always knew I should be. It is almost worth the waiting, though the waiting was such a dreadful waste of time, and I began to think it would never end. But now I can see perfectly well that no sooner time could have been the moment. Ivan had to be given an alternative, and just that little to provide the incentive to make it more. But that is all over and things are settled now, Sadie, I feel they are.

I shall never forget the day he came. Father was away. There was a knock at the door in the middle of the morning, and Ivan! He must have started off at about seven in the morning, and when he explained, I knew it was all right. I was washing ornaments in the kitchen for sheer want of something better to do. I can't possibly tell you in adequate language how utterly bored and at a dead stop I was. Ivan had ham and tea in the kitchen. And I sat on the table and stared at him. Later father returned. I went to the station and met him. I told him on the way home, leading him gently up to the point where I showed him Ivan standing in the doorway. Poor father. He took it very well. He said he would accustom himself to become resigned to the inevitable. The last poor resource of old age. Then he was very nice to Ivan. He didn't say if he liked him or not. Father never would. But he did not say he didn't, so I think it would be unreasonable to expect more.

We were married very soon after. It was the most wonderful thing I shall ever know. I'd so nearly given up

expecting him. And that evening when you came I was so pleased to see you. I was not absolutely certain how you would view the affair. But you are the most generous person, Sadie, I needn't have worried. I am very happy. Really, I suppose we should not be here. Ivan ought to be making money, not spending it. But he says he intends to start working very seriously indeed later. I think that's wonderful of him, don't you?

So here we are. It is a wonderful place. Imagine, my dear, an hotel, an old château of a house, and for a view one interminable range of mountains, black with valleys, and white in great patches with glaciers. And all along the summits, like volumes of smoke, clouds rolling. Gigantic gray things. Mounting and billowing and dispersing and reforming. Descending and enfolding the mountains like a huge cloak around enormous shoulders. On gray days I cannot bear to look at it. It's all too impressive for me, but you would love it as a spectacle.

Down here in the valley it is lovely, soft and mild and sunny, and cool with rain. With grazing goats, and the women with bright handkerchiefs over their heads, and laced bodices, and brown, good-tempered, ugly faces. And there's an ass to bring round the morning's milk and collect the morning's rubbish. There is a church like an old, old woman tumbled in a gray heap on the hillside, and I go to it up a crooked, winding path. The mornings here are perfect. Cold and infinitely sweet from the rain in the night. We walk miles and miles and get lost, and the mist comes up all round us, but we always manage to get home all right and there doesn't seem to be anything Ivan doesn't know. The people—there are only about fifty—peasant folk, love him, and he talks patois to them with the most amazing ease. We return to England, and I suppose to London, next week, and something we shall never have again will be over. I don't mean just a sentimental allusion to a honeymoon, but simply that now Ivan is—well,

just nice. I shall always love him, but I know quite well that my life with him is likely to be something of an adventure. Don't misunderstand me, Sadie, I mean exactly that: an adventure. I shall never be absolutely sure of my beloved. It would, when you come to think of it, be rather unreasonable of me to expect such a thing. After all, what I love about Ivan is purely Ivan. And Ivan a settled and staid certainty would be a strange phenomenon indeed; that doesn't in any way detract from the romance of the thing. Rather, a spice of daring added to it. I cannot quite make out exactly what fund is going to keep us in life. I think Ivan's going to buy a house or two houses and convert them into flats or something. He says it's a very paying proposition nowadays, so that ought to be all right.

My father wrote me a letter full of kindness, and not one word of reproach, only saying that if I'm really happy, then I must have done well. He's always so sensible, father. Though I'm afraid he will take a little while to grow accustomed to Ivan. Father thinks no man should marry, and no woman should marry him under quite a thousand a year. But I'm to have my allowance still, so with that and Ivan's house we ought not to actually starve.

Ivan thinks father's a wonderful person. When he heard that he was going to give me my allowance still, even though we ran away so disgracefully, he was quite impressed. It's made him like father; which is a great comfort. Dearest Sadie, I do want to see you again. You will come and stay with me as soon as we get back, of course. You may have to sleep on the floor, but you will overlook a little thing like that, I know. Write and tell me that you are happy. I hope you won't mind this feeble, effusive letter. I am not the sensible, collected person I once was. Ivan sends his love with mine.

Ever your affectionate friend,

ANNE."

Sadie sat in the window seat in her room to read this. Like scattered treasure the late afternoon sunlight lay about the room, and by her cheek the warm window-pane felt like a near face, and down the long avenue the limes stood and rustled and whispered like many graceful ladies. With the letter loose-sheeted in her lap, she leant back, slanting her head in a long preoccupied gaze down the road to where the sun, like a ripe orange, dark and deep, stood whole and perfect, ere it sank into the sky. And she did not feel particularly lonely or deserted or forlorn, only the sky was so clear and pale and sweet, and the soft rose-flush on the opposite houses and in the thinning trees was so pretty, that she felt imbued with some slow, introspective sense. Aware, vaguely, of a depression, whose essence and being she could not define. Reflections passed and repassed through her mind. Mere shadows of thoughts, shapeless, fading, of no substance. And as if in sleep, uneasily dreaming, she saw herself, a shy strange creature, of little importance, for ever a prey to the swirl and rush of sensibilities and emotions she had not the power to understand or resist. Chosen for some inscrutable reason to play a sad inhuman part, as the one every one took for granted, the one to whom every one was tolerant, for whom every one had a kind, indulgent, unthinking smile. A burden on herself. One who carried no weight with any one, who made no lasting impression upon any one, whom no one loved with any passion, who was doomed only to hear of the things which all the rest experienced.

And then the others . . . Ivan and Anne, her father and mother, her friends, each and all interested in a life that furnished them with some contentment—with more, with some adventure. And Cousin Evelyn, happy at last, somewhere, no doubt, where she could enjoy herself in her own way. And the other one, dear old Uncle Solomon, happy enough, probably, wherever he might be. Busy, perhaps, in some celestial Firm. And behind them all, spell-bound,

incredulous with disbelieving eyes, Sadie could see something, some one, that must surely represent herself. Sadie Weinher also ran. Life was hard. Not that one got treated so remarkably badly: indeed no, but just that one started out with such a very different conception of what it might be to what it really became. Disillusionment. The travail, bitter, painful, at the birth of maturity. And she would get used to it soon.

Sadie stared out down the narrowing grove of trees, a shadow hovering in her wide fixed eyes. It was so nice to hear from Anne, so good to hear that she was happy after waiting so long. Anne was a dear. And she herself, was she not a very lucky girl? Still Sadie stared, caught in a gray web of melancholy. And if her eyelids dropped suddenly, and her lips moved, and her hands shifted in that little restless disturbance, her perpetual uneasiness, why, it was all on a quiet afternoon after the reading of a letter from a friend, a passing mood, and it left her soon.

THE END

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